

# AGENTS FOR CHANGE

Young People Combatting Islamophobia  
A Guide for Educators



BUILDING  
A STRONGER  
BRITAIN  
TOGETHER

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# A GUIDE FOR EDUCATORS

This resource has been designed to guide and support schools and other organisations who are interested in delivering a pupil-led project which tackles Islamophobia or other types of prejudice, either in partnership with other schools, or within their own setting. It follows a programme run by EqualiTeach between June and December 2019 across six education settings in Luton. This resource can be used either as a complete, step-by-step guide to implementing a similar project, or as a toolkit with key practical insights to inform similar work.

This resource is the product of a six-month, government-funded project run in Luton, working with a range of education settings: primary schools, secondary schools and Pupil Referral Units. Although it is a response to the context of Luton, much of the guidance offered is transferable when focussing on tackling Islamophobia and other prejudice in schools and other education settings.

## WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE?

This guide uses the project run by EqualiTeach as a template from which to develop insights in to how best to run a pupil-led project on tackling Islamophobia. It includes:

- how to plan for and begin an anti-Islamophobia project
- key principles
- actions to avoid
- insights in to how to run action planning workshops and campaign creation days
- activities to raise awareness of Islamophobia with pupils
- ideas for raising awareness of Islamophobia amongst staff and improving reporting systems within education settings.



# WHY IS THIS WORK IMPORTANT?

**"SCHOOLS PLAY AN ESSENTIAL PART IN EDUCATING YOUNG PEOPLE WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF LUTON, A TOWN PROUD OF ITS DIVERSITY AND HARMONY, TO TAKE THEIR PLACE IN THE GLOBAL COMMUNITY AND BECOME THE LEADERS OF TOMORROW."**

**CAROLINE DAWES  
SENIOR SCHOOL  
IMPROVEMENT ADVISOR  
LUTON BOROUGH COUNCIL**

## **The Impact of Islamophobia**

In Luton, hate crime figures are higher than the national average and the policing of demonstrations by organisations such as the EDL and Britain First has cost £2.9 million since 2010 (BLCF, 2017). 11% of Islamophobic incidents happen in educational institutions (Tell MAMA, 2017), including name-calling, jibes about so-called Islamic State, violence and victimisation when wearing a hijab (NSPCC, 2017). Many Muslim young people say abuse is so commonplace it is normalised (British Youth Council, 2016), and results in victims feeling isolated, withdrawn and lacking self-esteem (NSPCC, 2017).

## **Starting with Schools**

The population of Luton has grown significantly in the last decade. Projections from the last census in 2011 show that the traditional demographic profile has changed from a predominantly White population which sat alongside significant Pakistani and African-Caribbean communities, to a more culturally and ethnically diverse population with the addition of migrants from EU and African countries (Mayhew & Waples, 2011). Managing increasing diversity in schools is a challenge that Luton Borough Council recognises and to which it is committed.



Schools not only have a duty to provide safe, inclusive learning environments for all pupils and those in the school community, but are key in shaping formative attitudes, perspectives and values in young people. Therefore, it is essential that Islamophobia and other prejudice is tackled head-on in schools in order to create inclusive learning environments where every child can thrive and reach their full potential.

### **Tackling Islamophobia**

However, many teachers feel ill-equipped to tackle issues of Islamophobia in the classroom, often dismissing incidents or being unsure on how to respond effectively (British Youth Council, 2016). In addition, there is under-reporting of Islamophobic incidents and hate crime among young people as pupils don't know how to report, are fearful of doing so for making the situation worse or believe that nothing will be done (Kielinger & Paterson, 2013). Clearly, more robust systems for reporting Islamophobia are needed in schools.

This project sought to address this issue by capacitating young people and staff in schools to tackle Islamophobia through raising awareness of Islamophobia and its harms, equipping young people to think critically and reject prejudice and misinformation, upskilling staff on how to respond effectively to Islamophobic incidents and engaging young people to be Agents for Change in their communities.



## AT A GLANCE

The project that this guide is based on was carried out by EqualiTeach, working alongside Luton Borough Council and funded by the Building Stronger Britain Together Fund, between June and December 2019.

The six-month project brought together 46 pupils from six Luton schools, all working collaboratively to raise awareness of and tackle Islamophobia in their schools and community. The project was designed to empower pupils to do this themselves, assisting them to find meaningful and relevant ways to engage their local community.

The project comprised of a series of days in which the pupils came together to learn about Islamophobia and its divisive impact on communities, to action plan ways to raise awareness and improve reporting of Islamophobia within their schools, and to create Islamophobia awareness campaigns to roll out across Luton.

The initiatives undertaken by pupils were complemented with whole staff training on recognising and responding to Islamophobic incidents and strengthening school policies and procedures pertaining to prejudice-related incidents.

Once the young people had implemented their initiatives, their accomplishments were celebrated at an awards ceremony in December 2019.



# OUTLINE OF THE PROJECT

## Consultation and Planning Day

A day of consulting with young people, exploring Islamophobia and action planning initiatives.

1

## Campaign Creation and Dissemination

A day with a local artist creating campaign artwork to raise awareness of Islamophobia throughout the community.

2

## Staff Training

Working with staff in schools to promote an understanding of Islamophobia and improve reporting systems.

3

## Young People Creating Change

Young people implementing initiatives within their schools based on the outcomes of their action planning day.

4

## Celebrating Success

An opportunity for young people to share their successes; showcasing the work they have undertaken in their schools.

5

## AREAS OF SUCCESS

Strengths of this project:

- **Ensuring the work was young people-centred and led**, with staff playing a supporting role. This ownership of the work by young people allowed them to recognise their capacity for change and to feel empowered to be active citizens.
- **Encouraging collaboration.** Young people benefited from meeting others from different backgrounds with whom they shared their different experiences. This enabled the young people to develop a deeper understanding of Islamophobia and its impact. Where it is not possible for students to work with young people from a different setting it is worthwhile creating the time for young people to work with those in different year groups or classes.
- **Allowing the space for creativity.** Young people can be very passionate and open to exploring difficult topics in new ways. Encouraging pupils to be creative in their response to Islamophobia allowed them to develop new and innovative ways to explore and tackle identity-based bullying. During this project, pupils considered their day with local artist Sophie Gresswell a real highlight.
- **Celebrating success.** Providing the opportunity for young people to share their successes with others and see what has happened with their final campaign pieces was a great way for them to receive recognition for their work and to be inspired by the work other young people had undertaken.





## GOOD TO KNOW

During the project a number of key considerations became apparent which are worth anticipating before embarking on similar work:

- **Be aware of busy periods and holidays during the school year**, and plan the work accordingly. Particularly when working with other institutions, provide an overview of the timeline in advance and allow plenty of time for schools to meet deadlines. Keep a record of all communications and follow up phone calls with an email so that action points are in writing.
- **Consider how you will measure impact.** Get an idea of the knowledge of participating pupils at the start either through a survey or a focus group to ensure learning and shifting attitudes can be easily measured at the end. We found that SurveyMonkey was a useful tool for pre- and post-project surveys. These can easily be used to assess impact for both individuals involved in the work and the wider impact on the school community.
- **Reach out to local organisations.** As part of this project, we worked not only with the schools themselves but also with Luton Borough Council. The Council has a clear commitment to promoting community cohesion and challenging all forms of prejudice, hatred and extremism, and to working in partnership to achieve this. We would highly recommend working with external organisations, community partners and campaign groups on projects such as these. Such partners and groups will have experiences and ideas that may not be apparent to staff working on the project within school. For Luton, this project offers an important contribution to tackling Islamophobia and other forms of prejudice and hatred in the town, and going forward the Council will be inviting further contributions from partners across the community to help develop, extend and update the resources available to schools.



## THE IMPACT OF THE PROJECT

As mentioned above, any such project should be focused on the outcomes for the young people involved, the school community and the local area as a whole. Whilst projects on such a large scale can be daunting, their impact can be far-reaching.

**YES, I CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE...EVEN IF I ONLY INFLUENCE ONE PERSON, THEY CAN INFLUENCE ANOTHER AND SO ON UNTIL A LOT MORE PEOPLE ARE AWARE.**

**AWESOME!  
BRILLIANT!  
AN AMAZING  
OPPORTUNITY!**

**BEFORE I STARTED THIS PROJECT...I DIDN'T KNOW A FEW STUDENTS COULD MAKE SUCH A DIFFERENCE, NOT ONLY IN THEIR SCHOOL BUT IN THEIR HOMETOWN**

**YOUNG PEOPLE  
LIKE US ARE DOING  
THIS TO CHANGE  
LUTON, OR THE  
WORLD!**

**I AM LOOKING  
FORWARD TO MAKING  
CHANGES IN MY  
SCHOOL...WE CAN  
MAKE A DIFFERENCE!**

**I AM LOOKING  
FORWARD TO THIS  
WORK BECAUSE IT'S  
THE RIGHT THING TO  
DO!**

**AGENTS FOR CHANGE,  
LUTON 2019**

# BEFORE THE WORK STARTS

## KEY CONSIDERATIONS

### **What do I know about this topic?**

Before beginning any work on a topic such as this, it is important for participating staff to consider their knowledge base. What do they know about the topic? How do they know what they know? Are they bringing any value judgements to the discussion? Considering where biases may lie is the first step to ensuring the project is built on sound evidence-based information.

### **What are the project objectives?**

Be clear about what the objectives are for the project. To help formulate them, focus on who the benefactors are and the impact the project will have on these groups. Refer to the objectives throughout the project to ensure all initiatives work towards them.

### **How will success be measured?**

Consider how the impact of the work will be measured and how to ensure that all objectives have been met. There should be a pre- and post-project element to evaluation to most effectively measure change. This could be through a focus group with participants and beneficiaries at the start and at the end, or by doing pre- and post-project surveys.

### **What do you need help with?**

Make an inventory of anticipated tasks to be undertaken for the project at the beginning of the process. Doing this at the start can help identify areas where more help is needed. Having more than one person working on the project helps spread the workload and ensures the project can continue in the event that someone becomes unavailable.

### **How much time is available?**

Measure the outcomes and tasks against the time available for the project, so that more people can be recruited to support if necessary, and everyone can manage their workload. More support at different stages of the project may be needed, so the commitment made by supporting staff does not have to be for the entire project. If possible, allow extra time for the project to manage any unexpected incidents.



### How will I select pupils?

Consider carefully which young people to invite to lead on the project and try to ensure there is a variety of backgrounds represented so that young people can learn from each other. Using the project to offer leadership opportunities to young people who may not typically excel in the classroom environment or academic studies is an excellent way to engage a wider range of young people, potentially inspiring and engaging those who may not usually volunteer.

### How do I meet the needs of participants?

To ensure the project is relevant and appropriate, identify what the issues, knowledge level and attitudes are beforehand. This can be done through focus group discussions for in-depth insights from a small number of young people, paper or online surveys to get a wider insight from a larger group, or ideally a combination of both, if time and resources allow. Doing this can hone objectives for the project by ensuring they meet the needs of the participants, as well as inform evaluation reports as the needs are readily demonstrable to funders or sponsors.



### Can I get parents and carers involved?

Utilise the expertise of parents and carers where possible. Be open and transparent with them by informing them of the project early on, allow them the opportunity to come and ask questions about the project or share their views and expertise. If possible, asking them to complete questionnaires can give concrete, additional and valuable insight into relevant issues which can be fed into the project to strengthen it.



# PHASE 1: CONSULTATION AND PLANNING

In September 2019, participating young people from the six Luton schools attended a consultation and planning day at the Leagrave Centre, where they learned about Islamophobia and action planned ways in which they could tackle it in their school and local communities.

The aims of the day were to:

- help young people to understand the impact of Islamophobia
- counter myths, stereotypes and misunderstandings about Islam
- explore young people's experiences of Islamophobia
- consider the issues in their individual schools
- support young people to develop action plans



100% of the young people who participated in the consultation and planning day said that they were looking forward to making changes back in their schools.

"I'm looking forward to the rest of the project because..."

- I don't want my schoolmates being Islamophobic
- I want to make a difference
- If everyone was in harmony at school, it would be good
- Everyone is equal and everyone should be respected and I want to help
- We can inspire others
- We get to change things!

## TOP TIPS

**Harnessing and Sharing Expertise** – Having different experts deliver parts of the workshop is a useful way to expose young people to a wider level of knowledge, and helps keep them engaged through meeting new people and receiving different styles of delivery. This project benefited from having Sukaina Manji, an experienced PSHE teacher, deliver the workshop on exploring Islamophobia, and Police Sergeant Carl Perri give a presentation on the commitment of the local police to tackle hate crime and inform young people about how to report it. This sharing of knowledge highlighted the under-reporting of Islamophobic hate crime, as several of the witnessed Islamophobic incidents recorded by the pupils in the Snowball Fight activity (see next page) had never been reported to the police, showing how valuable it is to bring people in the community together to share their knowledge and experiences.

**Bringing Young People Together** – To encourage young people to mix, design activities that reward moving away from peer groups and sharing knowledge. In our ‘Wonder Wall’ activity, young people gathered around a long rolled out piece of flipchart paper with marker pens to write down what they knew and understood of Islam and Islamophobia. As part of this activity, they posed and responded to each other’s questions. The ‘Snowball Fight’ activity had pupils writing down personal experiences of Islamophobia on pieces of paper and sharing them by screwing them

up and throwing them to other pupils around the room to read. The workshop carousel merged pupils from different schools into new groups who moved to different points in the room to learn about different possible initiatives and to discuss and consider which ones may work in their schools. All these activities encouraged collaboration, but none made it essential to work with peers from other schools, thus ensuring that pupils felt comfortable and engaged throughout.

**Creating a Safe Space** – With any work on a difficult and emotive topic, it is essential to create a safe space from the outset. This requires establishing ground rules in collaboration with the participating young people to ensure everyone can participate. Examples of these are: taking turns to speak so that there are many active participants, listening to others’ opinions, disagreeing politely and respectfully, depersonalising comments, and valuing honesty. Depending on how controversial the topics to be discussed are, consider holding practice discussions beforehand on a less controversial topic.



# EXAMPLE ACTIVITY

## SNOWBALL FIGHT!



This activity is an example activity from the Agents for Change consultation and planning day. Many more examples can be found in the resource 'Faith in Us' which is available at [www.equaliteach.co.uk/faith-in-us](http://www.equaliteach.co.uk/faith-in-us). This example has been included here to demonstrate one way in which difficult conversations can be explored with pupils. The answers provided (overleaf) also provide an insight in to the sort of experiences young people often face in regard to Islamophobia.

### Aims:

- To provide young people with the opportunity to share experiences of Islamophobia
- To explore the impact of Islamophobia
- To explore how best to deal with experiences of Islamophobia
- To consider what can prevent incidents of Islamophobia from happening

### Delivery:

- Give each pupil an A4 sheet of paper and ask them to write down an example of Islamophobia that they have experienced or witnessed or that they have heard about on the news. Explain that they don't need to write their name on the piece of paper.
- When everyone has written down their example, instruct the pupils to scrunch the paper into a ball and have a snowball fight. Pupils can pick up balls which fall near them and continue throwing until they are requested to stop. When enough time has passed, instruct the pupils to stop, pick up a ball and look at what is written on it in their groups. Ensure that all pupils have a snowball.
- Instruct the pupils to talk about the scenarios and write how they would feel if they happened to them. When everyone has completed this, they should scrunch the paper back up and have another snowball fight. Again, ensure that all pupils have a snowball.
- Instruct the pupils to talk about the scenarios in their groups and write down what they think should happen next. When everyone has completed this, they should scrunch the paper back up and have another snowball fight.
- After the last fight, ask each group to choose one scenario and discuss what could have prevented the scenario from happening.
- If required, ask each group to present the whole scenario from start to finish to the rest of the group.

The non-Muslim girl refused to stand next to the Muslim girl because she didn't like Muslims.

I saw this guy ripping off this Muslim girl's headscarf.

I've heard some people went into a Mosque with guns and started to shoot.

"I don't want to learn anything about Islam, I was told to stay away from Muslims" - student to a Muslim teacher

...me and my mum were lining up to checkout and some lady turned around and called me a 'bloody Muslim'.





## PHASE 2: CAMPAIGN CREATION

A key part of this project was supporting the young people to create work that would impact on their community beyond the school gates.

To achieve this, we teamed up with local artist Sophie Gresswell, who has worked within various spaces across Luton creating installations that challenge people's perceptions of identity.

Sophie wanted the Agents for Change to consider ways to use subversive art to challenge one-dimensional perceptions of Islam and to explore the complexity of everybody's identity. Prior to meeting with the pupils, Sophie shared examples of artists who have explored similar themes and then asked the young people to use this inspiration to consider their own identities. They were asked to attend the campaign creation day with objects that represented parts of their identity.

On the day young people were asked to work in groups to complete a carousel of activities. The intention was that young people would both create work that could be displayed in communal areas across Luton, and also explore their power to create change through the activities themselves. For more information about these activities see page 19.

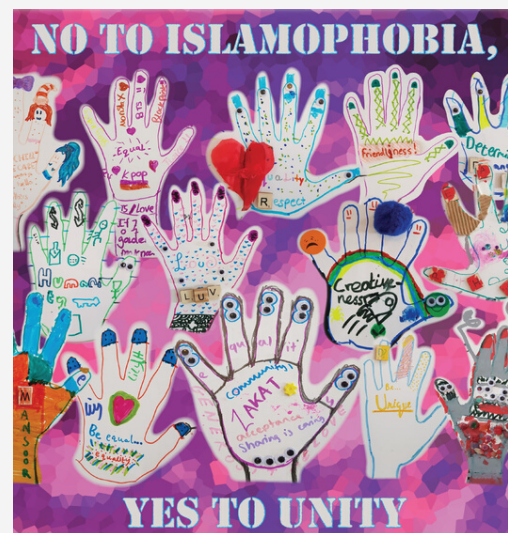
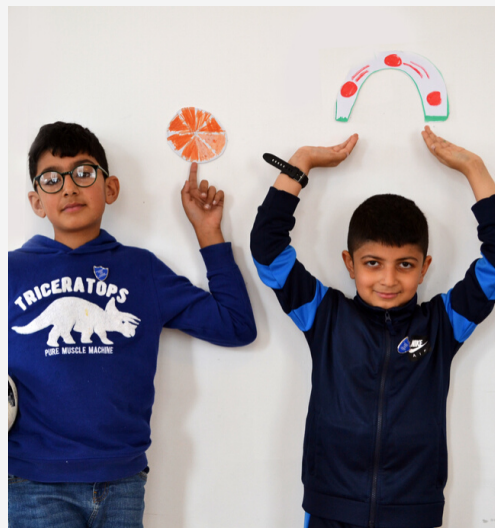
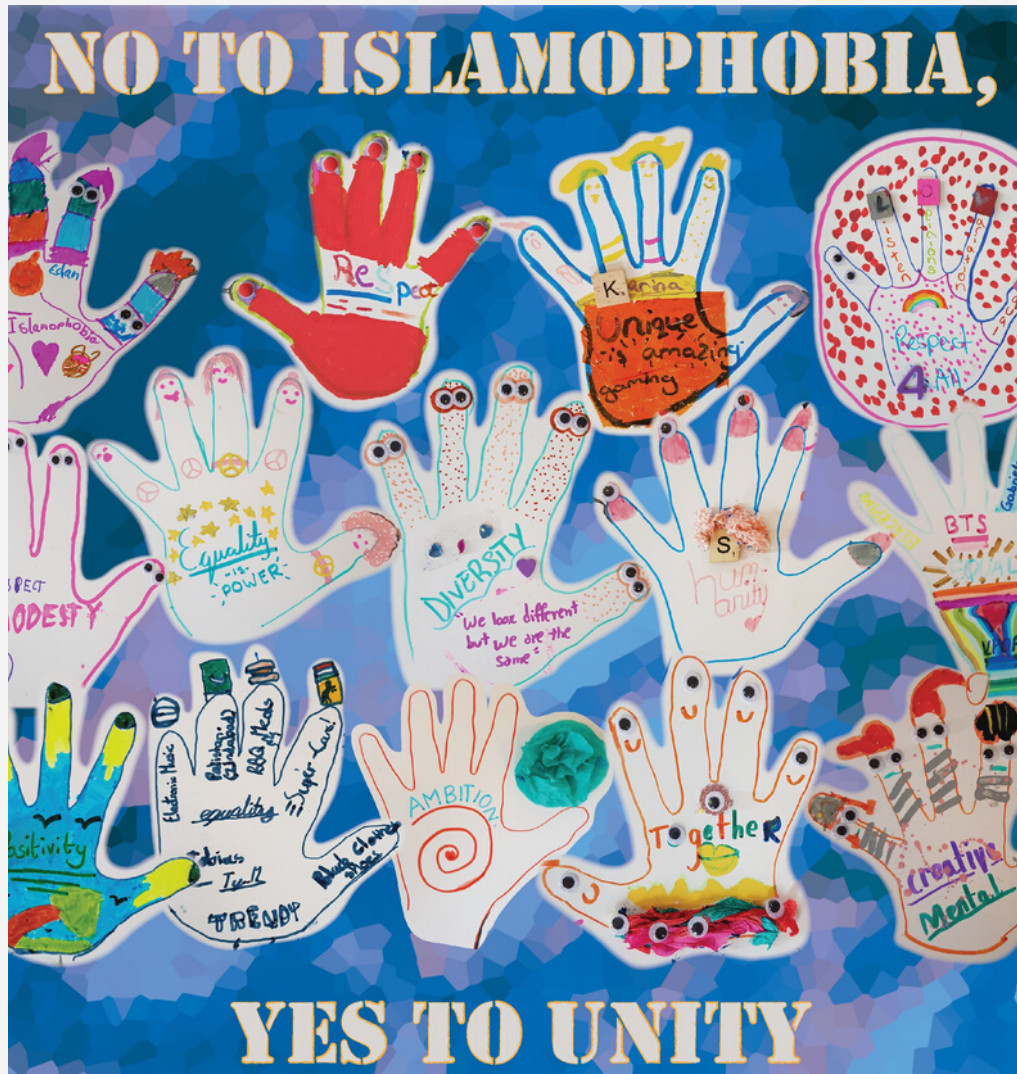


Once the Agents had completed their artwork, EqualiTeach contacted a number of places looking to display their work and were overwhelmed with the number of venues that were happy to support a project such as this. When looking for places to display young people's work, and to show them how far their voice can reach, we recommend contacting:

- libraries
- community centres
- shopping centres
- transport companies
- art galleries and museums

As a result of our communications, the young people's artwork will be displayed in Central Library in Luton, smaller libraries across Luton, Central Mall Luton and on screens across Bedford libraries.







# IN HER OWN WORDS: ARTIST SOPHIE GRESSWELL

"The young people created three different types of artwork looking at identity and individuality as a way to combat discrimination. The tasks were as follows:

**Interactive Hand Prints:** This activity asked young people to draw round their own hand and write a word of their choice related to identity in the centre.

The interactive element comes as each young person is recorded saying their word (written in the centre of the handprint), through a device called a makey makey and scratch. Each handprint can be connected to a computer so that when the handprints are pressed it will speak the corresponding young person's word, allowing the artwork to also empower their individual voice.



**Mugshots/Photo Shoot:** This activity asked the young people to set up photos in order to put across positive messages, and subvert negative stereotypes. In pairs or small groups the young people were allowed to use a variety of dressing up props in order to do this, as well as being asked to create their own props on card.

**Gracious Graffiti:** This activity was divided into two age appropriate tasks. Younger students were asked to create stencils, based on the use of geometric and reoccurring patterns in Islamic art. These stencils were then placed onto a board and pupils were allowed to spray paint over their individual stencil. The secondary age pupils were then asked to create a phrase which would reinforce the anti-Islamophobia message. The phrase was made into a stencil which the older young people then spray painted on-top of the younger pupil's patterns.

I think using creative art can be hugely effective when talking to young people about difficult subjects. The right arts activity can create a safe, playful space for young people to do so, without pressure or judgement. Art also allows the young people to create something which can carry a message. I believe that seeing their work up in public can also give young people a sense that they are valued, and that they have the power to make change in the wider world."

To find out more about Sophie and the work she does visit [www.sophiegresswell.co.uk](http://www.sophiegresswell.co.uk)

## PHASE 3: TRAINING STAFF

Phase 3 of the project involved delivering whole school staff training during twilight sessions. The main focus of the training was to equip staff to effectively recognise and respond to Islamophobic incidents in school.

These were interactive 90 minute sessions which aimed to:

- illustrate the reality and impact of Islamophobia on young people
- present the legal framework underpinning the need to tackle Islamophobia
- identify ways to effectively challenge negative attitudes to create positive change
- equip participants to recognise and respond effectively to Islamophobic incidents
- help participants understand the importance of recording prejudice-related incidents

Whilst schools may have robust systems in place to tackle bullying, many do not have similarly rigorous systems to tackle prejudice-related incidents, which do not necessarily have the repetition and intention to hurt that, bullying does. However, prejudice-related incidents still have a significant impact on a targets wellbeing and mental health, and prevent schools from being safe places of learning. Unfortunately, many teachers feel ill-equipped to tackle issues of Islamophobia and often dismiss them (British Youth Council, 2016).

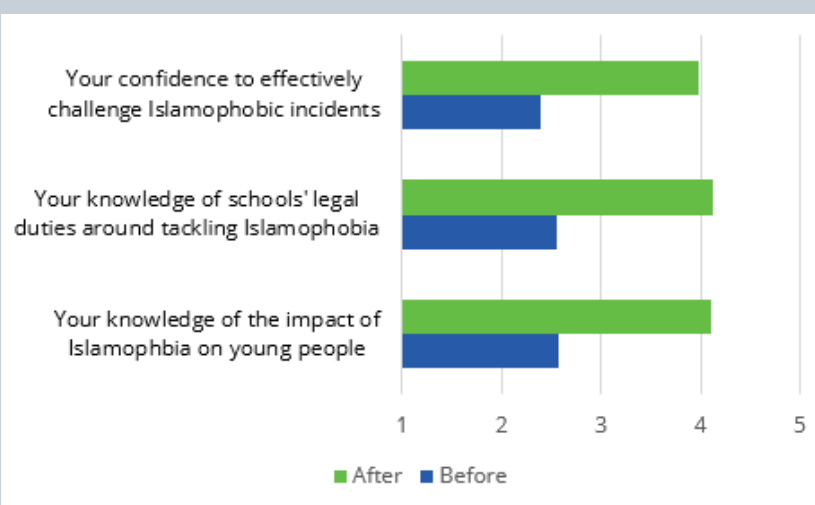
Therefore, after considering the moral and legal obligations placed on schools to tackle Islamophobia, the training focused on practical case studies looking at how to put this into practice. The case studies considered the immediate action to be taken, the longer term systemic action to be taken, and actions to be avoided when dealing with incidents. It also walked participants through the different stages of an effective response, from challenging negative behaviour, to the importance of reporting and conducting an investigation led by the Senior Leadership Team. This is particularly important for all staff to know, as there tends to be an under-reporting of Islamophobic incidents in schools across the UK. For further guidance on responding to Islamophobic incidents see page 24.





## STAFF FEEDBACK

Staff in all the schools where training was delivered stated overwhelmingly that the most useful aspects of the training were considering the strategies to challenge Islamophobia from young people or colleagues, gaining an insight into the impact of Islamophobia on young people and learning about the school's legal duties to tackle Islamophobia. They also enjoyed the opportunity to come together to discuss these topics and exchange ideas.

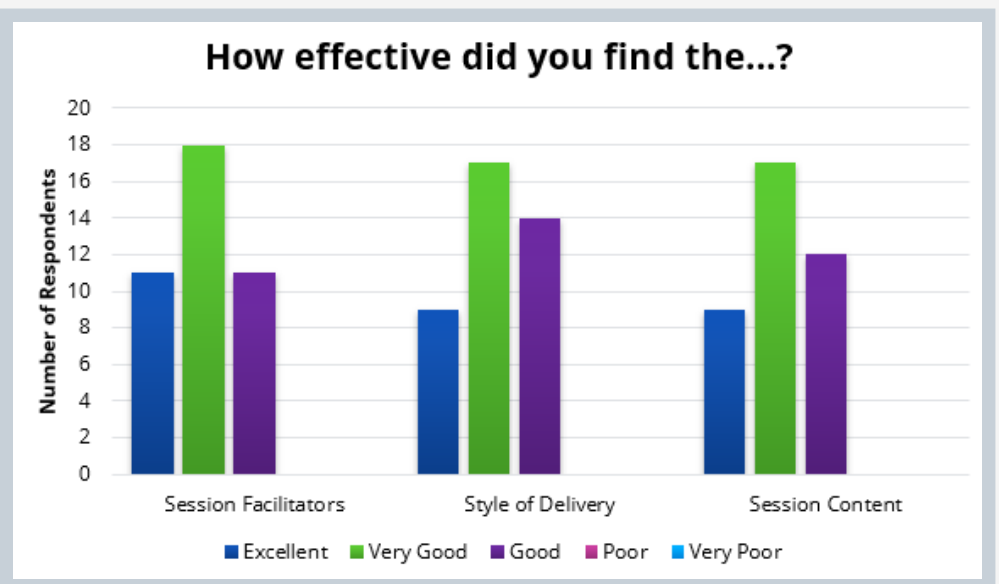


### Beechwood Primary School, Luton

Participants were asked to provide a score from 1-5 to indicate their confidence in tackling Islamophobia prior to and after staff training. The results highlight the need for this work and the effectiveness of devoting time to discuss these issues.

### Chantry Primary School, Luton

Participants were asked to provide a score rating the effectiveness of the training session.



"The session was really insightful and the facilitator was really well informed."

Staff member, Tennyson Road Primary, Luton

## TOP TIPS

### **Undertake surveys before and after training takes place**

– It is important to do both pre-and post-training surveys to measure any shift in attitudes and knowledge, in order to determine how effective training is. Using online software such as survey monkey is efficient as it analyses the data graphically, yet it is sometimes difficult to ensure all participants complete it. Factoring in time to include questionnaires at the start and the end of the training on paper guarantees that all attending participants complete feedback on the day, and providing email addresses allows for further feedback to be given later if necessary.

### **Deliver training to the whole staff team -**

Having all staff attend the training sends out a powerful message of unity and inclusion, and ensures that the school is serious about tackling Islamophobia. Creating a caring and nurturing school community needs everyone to be equipped with the tools to challenge prejudice, as it is not solely in the classroom under the eyes and ears of teachers that incidents may occur. It is also a good opportunity for staff to share knowledge, experience and ideas across departments, helping strengthen staff ties. If all staff cannot attend the training session, it is useful to cascade the learning to others through another session, or for the PSHE lead or equality lead to deliver the key takeaways of the training in another session or in staff meetings.

**Use case studies** – Using practical examples of situations that could occur in school allows participants to consider how best to apply their learning in a structured way. Allowing participants to work together and share their approaches and the reasons for them is beneficial as it allows them to explore different strategies and collectively evaluate which are most effective. Ensure handouts are available to illustrate good practice and to consolidate learning.



# POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

In order to reinforce the messages sent out during staff training, it is important to ensure that all policies and procedures pertaining to prejudice-related incidents are reviewed and, where required, updated to ensure they fully support staff in responding to any incident that may occur. Without these there can be confusion about a school's stance and what is expected of staff and young people. Use policies and procedures to send a very clear message: prejudice in any form is not tolerated in the school and every incident will be dealt with seriously. The key policies to consider here are:

## EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY

It is best practice for schools to have a robust Equality and Diversity Policy. This document is important because it outlines what is expected from all stakeholders with regards to equality and the steps the school is taking to ensure equality is embedded and discrimination is tackled throughout their practice. To create a strong policy, it is important to have sound knowledge of the Equality Act 2010. Important areas to reference within an Equality and Diversity Policy are:

- equality legislation and how it is applicable to schools
- who is protected by the policy
- what the policy protects against
- what procedures are in place when something goes wrong
- the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders
- how the policy will be disseminated and shared
- when and how the policy will be monitored and evaluated

For a sample Equality and Diversity Policy, see <https://www.equalitiesaward.co.uk/ideas-hub/sample-equality-diversity-and-cohesion-policy>



## BEHAVIOUR OR ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

Every school Behaviour Policy should make specific reference to religiously-motivated incidents as a serious incident and may include Islamophobia specifically. It must also acknowledge the Equality Act 2010 and the school's responsibility to safeguard those with a protected characteristic, including those with or without a religion or belief system. For Islamophobia to be tackled it is important that this policy makes it clear that prejudice of any kind (language and behaviour) is unacceptable and should recognise that incidents can be on-going or a one-off. It should also set out how Islamophobic language and behaviour will be dealt with.

Governmental advice on creating a Behaviour Policy can be found here:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/488034/Behaviour\\_and\\_Discipline\\_in\\_Schools\\_-\\_A\\_guide\\_for\\_headteachers\\_and\\_School\\_Staff.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/488034/Behaviour_and_Discipline_in_Schools_-_A_guide_for_headteachers_and_School_Staff.pdf)

# RECOGNISING AND RESPONDING TO ISLAMOPHOBIC INCIDENTS

## HOW TO RECOGNISE AN ISLAMOPHOBIC INCIDENT

The working definition of an Islamophobic incident is as follows:

An Islamophobic incident is any incident which is perceived to be Islamophobic by the victim or any other person (APPG, 2018)

This definition dictates that any complaint of Islamophobia needs to be taken seriously and investigated. This definition is purposefully broad. It aims to avoid situations in which a target or witness fears they won't be believed or the person an incident has been reported to is unsure whether an incident requires further investigation. It is also important to note that there is no mention of intention within this definition. It is the impact of Islamophobic incidents that is important, not the intention behind them. After an investigation has taken place, it may, of course, be concluded that no Islamophobic incident did occur, however working to this definition ensures that all parties are given a fair hearing and that no incidents go undealt with.

## RESPONDING TO AN INCIDENT

It is essential that all incidents that occur within a school are reported and recorded as such, even if they are one-off incidents not covered by the school's Anti-Bullying Policy. Thorough records are the only way to fully understand the nature, frequency and patterns of Islamophobia in the setting. The following pathway can be used as a template for putting together an effective procedure for responding to incidents:

### Immediate Action

- Treat the issue seriously—never dismiss a person's claim
- Offer support for the target and any bystanders who may have been harmed
- When speaking with the perpetrator, focus on their behaviour as opposed to their character, and make it clear that such behaviour is unacceptable
- Ensure any witnesses are aware that this behaviour is unacceptable and explain why.

### Investigation

- Inform relevant members of SLT and parents or carers
- Consult the school's procedures for dealing with prejudice-related incidents. This should include recording the incident and the eventual outcome
- Ensure everyone involved is individually given a fair hearing and an opportunity to share their version of events in a calm and non-confrontational environment
- Approach witnesses for written statements to inform the investigation
- Bring all parties together for conflict resolution
- Ensure all parties are made aware of the outcome of the investigation and the reason behind any actions taken.

### Long Term

- Give the perpetrator the opportunity to repair the harm they have caused
- If this incident has highlighted the need for further training or education on Islamophobia, ensure this is organised
- Targets and their parents or carers have a right to refer cases to the police and all parties have a right to appeal to the school's Governing Body.





## PHASE 4: YOUNG PEOPLE CREATING CHANGE

The final phase of this project saw young people being given the space and opportunity to implement the initiatives they had designed during their action planning.

A top tip at this point is to ensure that notes from the action planning day are kept somewhere safe, ready to be used again at the required time. It is also important to schedule times in advance for young people and staff to come together to implement their ideas. Once the school term has started, it can be difficult to prioritise these meetings so it is important to get time put aside in advance.

The Agents for Change at Beechwood Primary in Luton decided to create a kindness tree. This involved creating a display that featured a tree with branches but no leaves. The leaves are hung up near the display. As young people pass the tree they are encouraged to take a leaf and write on it any acts of kindness they have seen that day. The idea being that young people can see all the kindness that happens within their school, contributing to, and encouraging, a culture of helpfulness, respect and kindness amongst pupils.



The Agents at Beechwood also decided that they wanted to create a 'buddy bench'. This bench, created in honour of an ex-pupil at the school, has been decorated and placed in the playground. Pupils have been informed that they can sit on this bench should they be lonely, need to someone to play with or need help with something. Other pupils then know to look out for people sitting on this bench.

The Agents for Change at Chantry Primary decided to create a video to raise awareness of and tackle Islamophobia. The video examines:

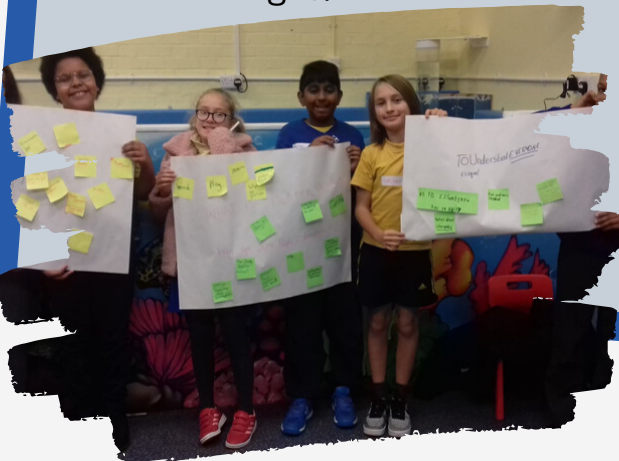
- What is Islam?
- What is Islamophobia?
- Why is Islamophobia wrong?
- What people should do if they witness or experience Islamophobia

Watch the video here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WXccpT5eJmk>



At Tennyson Road Primary in Luton, the Agents for Change decided to write and perform their own assembly for all the young people in the school. The assembly comprised of explaining to other young people what Islamophobia and identity-based bullying are and how to report it. The young people spent time brainstorming the different parts of their assembly before coming together to write the script and PowerPoint. They even considered how to differentiate it so that it could be delivered to all key stages.



## LOOKING AHEAD



With projects such as these, it is important for young people to see that their ideas and initiatives have not just an immediate impact but also a long-term one. Whilst, as a one-off, this project can be very powerful, sustained and meaningful change is achieved when the project is also used to inform future initiatives. This can be achieved in a number of ways:

- Assign a lead member of staff to oversee the project now and to roll it out in future years. This will ensure continuity and allow young people and staff to build upon the successes of previous projects.
- Continue to use consultation as means of assessing the impact of the project and identify areas that require further work. This could include annual surveys of young people and staff around identity-based bullying. It could also include staff and pupil voice.
- Use the results of the consultation to not only inform the work of the Agents for Change but to also identify areas that staff need to work on. For instance, if consultation processes reveal that particular areas of the school are hot spots for bullying, can changes be made to the building or increased numbers of staff placed in these areas to monitor behaviour?
- Include regular training on Islamophobia and identity-based bullying. Staff training on behaviour, bullying or safeguarding are the perfect place to include training on identity-based bullying and prejudice-related incidents. Where this can't happen, ensure that training on this issue is included within staff induction processes.
- Keep policies and procedures updated. It is important to ensure that policies are regularly reviewed and updated by school staff and governors. It is also important that these documents are used; being shared with stakeholders as they are updated and changed.
- Continue to work with local community groups throughout the school year. Keeping lines of communication open ensures that the school can respond to emerging issues in a timely manner, using community groups to support where needed. Perhaps assemblies, talks and visits from such groups could become a regular part of the school year.



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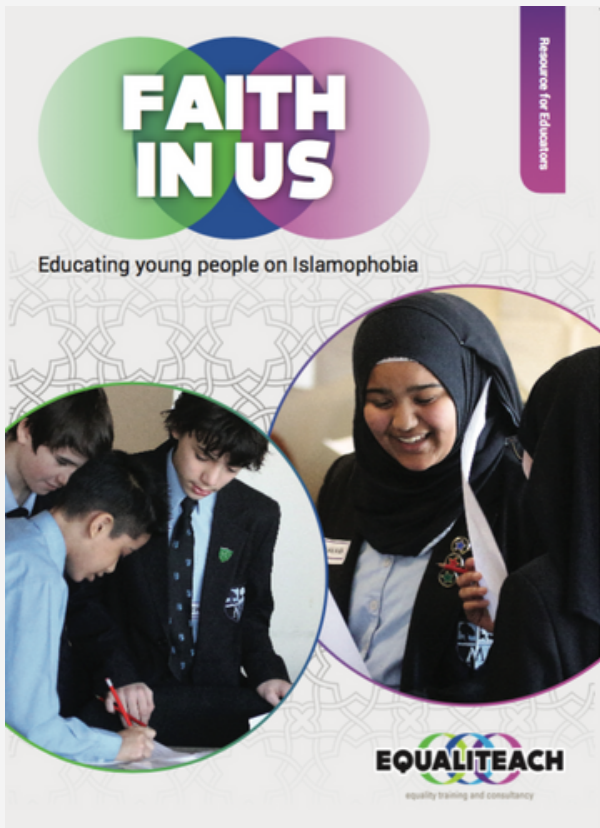
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## FURTHER RESOURCES



### Faith in Us

Faith in Us is a guide for educators created by EqualiTeach and available on the EqualiTeach website.

It has been designed for both secondary and primary teachers for use in the classroom to educate young people about Islamophobia.

It provides comprehensive guidance on planning work on this topic and includes lesson plans and activities to undertake with young people.

Access the guide at:

<https://www.equaliteach.co.uk/faith-in-us/>

**The Crown Prosecution Service** have produced classroom activities and guidance for teachers on hate crime motivated by race or religion: [http://www.report-it.org.uk/files/classroom\\_activities\\_and\\_pupils\\_worksheets.pdf](http://www.report-it.org.uk/files/classroom_activities_and_pupils_worksheets.pdf)

**The Children's Commissioner for Wales** has produced a teaching resource for KS3 and KS4 students about Islamophobia: <https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/our-work/resources/tackling-islamophobia-resource/>

**Show Racism the Red Card** has resources with a range of activities for all Key Stages on Islamophobia and how to combat it in schools: <http://www.theredcard.org/news/2009/07/09/islamophobia-education-pack>

**Frontline: Portraits of Ordinary Muslims** is a resource that can be used to expand young people's monolithic view of Islam and Muslims by engaging with lived experience and personal stories (KS4 – 5): <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/muslims/>



# BACKGROUND TO EQUALITEACH



EqualiTeach is a nationwide not-for-profit equality and diversity training and consultancy organisation, which inspires and empowers people to create equal, diverse and inclusive environments where everyone feels safe, valued and able to succeed.

We deliver:

**Workshops for Young People:** Interactive workshops for young people in KS2- KS5 exploring issues such as racism, Islamophobia, homophobia, sexism, disability discrimination and anti-immigrant sentiment.

**Training for Educators:** Training for teachers, trainees, support staff, senior leadership teams and governors, to help promote equality and tackle discrimination in their settings.

**Classroom Resources:** Free to download educational resources for teachers to use in their settings to promote equality, celebrate diversity and tackle discrimination. Early Years- KS4.

For further information about our work, please visit: [www.equaliteach.co.uk](http://www.equaliteach.co.uk)



EqualiTeach has also launched the Equalities Award by EqualiTeach. The Equalities Award is an online audit tool designed to support schools to effectively promote equality, diversity and inclusion and allow them to showcase their commitment to equality.

To find out more about achieving a Bronze, Silver or Gold Award for your school, please visit [www.equalitiesaward.co.uk](http://www.equalitiesaward.co.uk).

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