

Muslims, Jews and COVID-19
Muslim Jewish Forum dialogue event via Zoom on 12 April 2020
Edited chat record

Muslim Jewish Forum Co-Chair Mohammed Amin has edited this chat for conciseness, clarity, and anonymity.

As well as sending out his own communications, the Moderator (Jonny Wineberg) also used his chat facility to record comments being made orally by dialogue participants.

In the chat record below, such items have been labelled “**Participants.**”

Moderator:

Welcome everyone.

We are starting with a presentation about the Forum and some of the issues we are facing with COVID-19

Moderator:

Following Amin's presentation, we will be opening up the discussion around the three questions we put for this dialogue:

1. Why are Muslims and Jews suffering much higher than expected rates of infection than the national population?
2. What should we be doing during the COVID-19 crisis?
3. How do we recover once the crisis is over?

Moderator:

Please speak to the first question:

Why are Muslims and Jews suffering much higher than expected rates of infection than the national population?

Participants:

Not mentioned issues with compliance and fairly high Mosque and Synagogue attenders who came together early on.

Some negative responses in the wider community to the exceptions being made to Jewish and Muslim Burial.

Not necessarily true that there is a higher percentage of occurrence with the Muslim and Jewish communities, but it needs investigation.

Question of whether Vitamin D deficiency increases the risk from COVID-19 was asked.

A positive example for larger households is one where they have effectively split a home into two to protect those without symptoms.

There has been a slowness in stopping religious gatherings.

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Panic buying e.g. in Kosher shops before Passover could have been issue.

Communal prayers continuing behind the scenes.

High incidence of diabetes in both communities.

Taxi drivers may have higher prevalence.

Taxis should have windows open. There is great risk here.

Many people in Cheetham Hill not taking enough care.

Number of bus drivers who have died was shocking.

High proportion of Jews and Muslims working in hospitals

There have been a lot of Jewish deaths over the last few days and it certainly seems that there is a higher prevalence.

There have been secondary consequences with people not going to hospital for other reasons.

Crowded prayers and family occasions would seem make our communities more susceptible.

Shopping - does seem to be more care being taken now.

A question for the elected councillors who were on the call:

Do bus drivers in Salford have added protection now? More screening. Waving payment or enter bus at the back and pay there -non touch, and keep distance from driver?

Concern over those in hospital and surrounded with COVID-19 patients and whether they have proper PPE.

There is PPE in Salford - stored in basement. People should contact if needed. 0800 952 1000 Salford number.

Same for taxi drivers to call.

Moderator:

Does anyone want to speak to the second question:

What should we be doing during the COVID-19 crisis?

Participants:

We need to phone friends - mental health. Think of those on their own who need support.

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Concern over Care Workers who are going to homes and potentially spreading the disease.

Someone at risk has had letters, calls and has been impressed by that response from officialdom. Plus wonderful neighbours.

From an individual participant:

"Once the Crisis is over"

How will we recognise when the crisis is over?

What will the world look like when the crisis is over?

I wonder if the word to use will be "adapt" instead of recover?

Moderator to individual participant: (Privately)

That's the next question! How do we recover once the crisis is over?

From Mohammed Amin:

In response to [individual participant's] question. "I think the crisis will only be over once we have medicines to treat COVID-19, which at present we do not, and a vaccine to stop people catching it."

Participants:

Again, stressed that there is equipment in Salford - need to ensure that people know.

There is a lot of help available and many people doing wonderful work.

Equipment is being used in care homes.

We do need to look at positive aspects - people doing more exercise - using the allowance of exercising once a day!

There is a friendliness around and people are taking stock of their lives.

The online meetings have also been good and could be done more.

Moderator:

Moving on to the third question:

How do we recover once the crisis is over?

Participants:

Will likely be PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) and other mental health issues as a result. This could disproportionately affect the Jewish and Muslim communities who are heavily represented in the health service, as well as wider BAME community.

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I think there is going also to be a massive economic impact. Worrying that we may go into a recession

Financial issues for care homes.

There is a need to work together to support each other regardless of background.

We are already in a massive recession. I wonder, if we can work together, support our communities, how do we reach out to the wider community to provide support? Maybe it's about providing inspiration?

Whitefield has set up a community WhatsApp group to support people isolating. Hopefully this will continue after.

Reduced travel, flights etc. will hopefully have some impact on climate change.

Needs to be a clear exit strategy. Things will change.

May need to be legislation so that Councils can meet online.

We will need to pull together as there will be a need to work hard to get back to where we were.

One psychologist felt that there may be a return to how we were before a few months after the crisis is over.

Messaging people once a week to check up on them elicits lovely responses.

Volunteering to phone people is also appreciated.

People do move out the way and are friendly when going out.

Haven't missed the news over three days of Passover - was a good break.

GMCA Engagement Team have ensured representation from diverse communities. GM COVID-19 committee has received information on these issues. Some of those arising from this dialogue will be taken back.

An independent foodbank, not connected with Trussell Trust, have been directly supported from GMCA.

Hopefully cooperation between statutory and voluntary & faith groups will continue after the crisis.

A question about whether foodbanks were providing healthy food. Another participant responded that it is up to local foodbanks who are aware and look to ensure a balanced bag.

There is a sector of people who live on their own and are vulnerable. They need shopping done.

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Many Independent retailers have been particularly good.

Moderator:

We will look to address some specific issues for isolated people following this dialogue.

Participants:

People need to be aware that they still need to go to hospital if they have significant health issues. NHS111 and GPs are available for phone consultations.

Shockingly 120% increase in calls to domestic abuse helplines.

There may be a significant increase in divorce after this crisis.

Also concern over abusing drink.