

Making a Difference Hall of Fame

Islamic counselling skills training

Equipping faith leaders to support mental wellbeing



The Challenge

Delivering Race Equality in Mental Health Care (DRE) is an action plan for achieving equality and tackling discrimination in mental health services in England for all people of black and minority ethnic (BME) status.

The action plan includes:

- Building the capacity of BME communities;
- Providing equitable care pathways;
- Building links and capacity with BME communities, including faith organisations,
- Supporting networks, service users and carers.

Bristol has a growing Somali community, resulting in a greater demand for mental health services. Such services need to be culturally sensitive and accessible.

To identify how best to meet that demand, an engagement event was held in Bristol. The event was part of the Department of Health

Clinical Trailblazer Project.

What we did

In Somali communities the first line of support is the Imam, a Muslim faith leader.

Individuals seek support for a wide range of issues, for example bereavement, education, physical and mental health, from Imams before seeking statutory support.

The engagement event identified that training Imams in counselling skills would support them to provide effective help and enhance community capacity to deal with mental health issues as they arise.

Based on the Islamic Counselling model, the NVQ Level 2 Certificate in Islamic Counselling Studies is an accredited qualification awarded by the British Counselling and Psychotherapy Central Awarding Body. Bristol is the first to have delivered this training to Imams.

Key learning

- Monitoring the referrals/ joint working occurring between staff and Imams needs to take place
- The demand on Imams from their community is high and they work over 60 hours a week
- Need to build on the success by continuing the level 3 training
- This work could be replicated with other faith leaders i.e. Black Churches
- AWP can make effective use of these relationships and training through incorporating and creating a diverse range of locum chaplains of various faiths

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Avon and Wiltshire 
Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust



Trainees progressed to become accredited counsellors. Islamic Counselling is employed to enable people to live resourceful and effective lives but is distinguished from other counselling methods by encompassing the personal spiritual dimension in addition to physical, psychological and social dimensions.

The course consisted of teaching, an exam and a portfolio that demonstrated self-learning, further reading and essay writing.

Five Imams attended from

different mosques plus community members and AWP staff.

Who was involved

Shah Jalal Jame mosque
Easton Islamee Darsagah mosque
Hosseinieh Foundation
Quran Academy Bristol
Bristol Taleem UI Islam Trust
Somali Mental Health Drugs Project workers
Andalusia Academy
AWP
Bristol Rethink
Bristol Muslim Cultural Society

What difference did it make

The course built the participants skills in listening techniques and giving mental health support to individuals. Training explained how to establish boundaries in counselling situations; using confidentiality and empathetic responses. Furthermore it helped establish new skills in signposting,

so they no longer feel responsible for sorting out all the issues.

"Now that I am using skills such as active listening and empathetic responses I feel that individuals are more able to make decisions themselves, as normally I would do more of the talking and provide advice."

Imam Imran Hussein, Hosseinieh Foundation mosque

AWP staff felt the training helped to build strong links with Imams and as a result have been able to work in a more holistic manner. Staff and Imams work together for the wellbeing of service users.

Course participants have set up a peer support group; to discuss cases, consider development needs and increase partnership working. All participants are enthusiastic to progress to level 3 of the course to enhance and build on their skills.

"Mental health issues in the Muslim community are often described as 'jinn, black magic or the evil eye'. With the support of the Imam we have been able to provide a service which includes both the spiritual beliefs and medical approach." Nazlin Nathoo, Bristol Assessment Review Coordinator

Throughout the course a signposting information pack was developed by Faiza Khaliq, Community Development Worker, listing a range of support agencies including AWP.

Contact

For more information please contact:

Faiza Khaliq
Faiza.Khaliq@awp.nhs.uk

enable and empower people to reach their potential and live fulfilling lives