



COPING WITH THE
EFFECTS OF CRIME
TOGETHER

HIGHLIGHTING ISLAMOPHOBIA

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS

What is Islamophobia?

There are differing definitions of Islamophobia, but generally it is accepted as the term used to describe prejudice against, hatred towards or the fear of Islam or Muslim people.

Islamophobia itself is not a crime, but some of the actions associated with it – such as physically assaulting or verbally abusing people, bullying and harassing them (face to face or online), or threatening them, because of their identity (or perceived identity) as a Muslim – are hate crimes.

How do young people experience Islamophobia?

Islamophobic hate crimes and hate incidents can happen at home, school or college, work, on the streets or on the internet. There is a wide range of anti-Muslim behaviour that can be described as Islamophobia, from a one-off abusive remark or name calling through to serious physical assault.

Islamophobic hate crimes can include:

- threats, bullying or verbal abuse (such as name calling)
- online or cyber-bullying through text, email or social networking
- antisocial behaviour
- assault
- criminal damage or graffiti
- distributing anti-Muslim literature.

We know from talking to young Muslims that such hate crimes and incidents are occurring increasingly online, through social media such as Facebook and Twitter, on websites and in chat rooms. Young people also feel the media focus on negative examples of Islam, such as terrorist attacks, or the child abuse scandals in Rotherham and Rochdale, lead to heightened Islamophobia.

There are also gender differences in the way young people experience anti-Muslim incidents. Girls and young women who wear the niqab, hijab or other traditional dress may be targeted and abused because of their clothing. Boys and young men may be targeted if they wear traditional dress, or have beards; but in the wake of the child abuse scandals, they find they are increasingly verbally insulted, being called 'Muslim groomers' or 'paedophiles'.

What is the impact on young people of Islamophobia and hate crime?

Just as Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hate crime can take many forms, young Muslims respond to such incidents in many different ways. Some do not recognise such actions as Islamophobia or hate crime, while others try to 'laugh off' or ignore verbal abuse.

Many of those we have worked with also said that, even if they wanted to report incidents of Islamophobia, they did not know who they could contact, or how they could report it anonymously. They would not report to police for a number of reasons – including a lack of trust, belief that the incident wasn't serious enough or wouldn't be taken seriously, not wanting to get involved in a long criminal process, or a fear of retribution. Others said they would avoid reporting an incident to a school teacher as they worried the teacher would over-react and they would lose control of the process. Young people preferred a conflict resolution and restorative approach to these incidents.

“ They told me to go back to my own country. Don't they understand that I was born here? ”

Things you can do to help as a parent

Watch for warning signs: not all young people will react the same, but victims of Islamophobia and hate crime of all ages may go through different emotions, from shock and anger to denial and depression. Your son or daughter may have trouble sleeping, lose their appetite, feel scared, have panic attacks or self harm; there's a list of some of the main signs to watch out for below.

Encourage them to talk: being a victim of any crime is tough, and talking to people about what happened may not be easy, but sharing a problem is much easier than dealing with it alone. Make sure your son or daughter knows they can talk to you. Give them time and space to talk, listen properly to what they say, don't judge, and ask them how you can help. It also important to help your children think through and make their own decisions; don't push them into decisions they may not want to make.

It doesn't have to be you: Talking about what has happened maybe difficult enough for a young person, but talking to a parent maybe harder than talking to another adult they trust, particularly if they worry about upsetting you. Let them know that if they would rather talk to someone else, that's fine, and help them to arrange that conversation. Your support will mean a lot.

Advocate: Your son or daughter may have had the courage to talk to you, but they may not be comfortable talking to their school, sports club, police, or other agencies. You can support them to do that. Make sure you know what they want as a result of any conversations – for example, do they want to officially report the crime to police? Do they want action taken at school? Once you have talked through their options, help and support them to get the resolution they want.

Encouraging your child to report a crime: If your child has been the victim of an anti-Muslim hate crime, they may be worried about reporting it. You&Co and other organisations

“ They pulled my headscarf off and threw it on to the ground. I've never felt so afraid; I didn't know what they would do next.”



are there to support them whether they report the crime or not, but reporting a crime can help in a lot of ways. It can mean the person responsible may get caught and stopped; it can prevent other young people from becoming victims; and it gives your child the chance to explain what happened. You can find more detailed information on why they should report the crime, and what happens when they do, on the You&Co website (www.youandco.org.uk).

What happens when you report a crime? If your son or daughter reports the crime to police, they will be asked to make a statement (they should be able to have an adult stay with them for this), which should be enough for police to start an initial investigation. Depending on the type of crime, and if the offender is known or likely to reoffend, they may be arrested and questioned quite quickly. You should be given a crime reference number, which you can use to find out what's happening in the investigation; the police should keep you up to date with any developments, including whether there have been any arrests, what has happened to the offender, and whether the case will be going to court. If you can't encourage your child to talk to police, they can still report the crime anonymously online (see the 'Who else can help?' section below for more information).

Plan for the future: Having listened to your child, and helped them to take whatever action they feel comfortable with, think about what to do next. You can find information on how to put together safety strategies, and helping your child to avoid becoming a victim again, on the 'How do I make safer choices?' section of the You&Co website. The site can also give you more information on coping strategies for victims of crime, and what happens when you report a crime.



Support for parents

If your child has experienced Islamophobia or been the victim of an anti-Muslim hate crime, the incident may well have an impact on you as a parent too. If a member of your family is targeted simply because they are Muslim (or because someone thought they were Muslim) it can make you feel angry, worried, upset or afraid.

Just like young people, it's important for parents to be able to share their concerns and fears too. If you talk to other parents, you may find their children have been through similar experiences; it may also reveal a bigger problem with Islamophobic behaviour or hate crimes, which could help police, schools and other agencies recognise and tackle the issue.

By talking to other parents you may also be able to put together joint safety plans and coping strategies (more information about these is available on the You&Co website, at www.youandco.org.uk). You may also be able to get help from your child's school, from your GP, from religious leaders and communities, and from your local authority family services team.

Remember, it's important for your child's safety to encourage them to report crimes and Islamophobic behaviour, and to take steps to make sure they don't become a victim again. And as a parent, the best way to encourage them is to lead by example. You may have been told in the past not to react to or report anti-Muslim crimes and incidents, but it's important to act now, to make sure such behaviour doesn't continue.

Warning signs – what to look for:

Below is a list of some of the common indicator signs displayed by young people who have been victims of anti-Muslim hate crimes or incidents. This list is not exhaustive – and some young people are very good at covering up the signs – but if your child is behaving in any of these ways, it's important to talk to them to find out why.

- Difficulty in concentrating at school
- Getting into trouble at school
- Not achieving or progressing at school
- Low attendance at school
- Missing out on activities and hobbies such as sports clubs and youth clubs
- Not attending religious events or places of worship, such as the mosque
- Isolating themselves from friends or family
- Avoiding food, or eating too much food
- Repeatedly complaining of feeling ill, such as feeling sick or suffering from tummy aches
- Regularly feeling tired or having problems sleeping
- Changing their appearance or the clothes they wear (covering up)
- Changing their routine
- Experiencing panic attacks
- Self-harming
- Alcohol and drug misuse
- Going missing from home, or not telling you where they are
- Not communicating with you, or behaving defensively

“ I was on my way to school when they approached me. They asked if I was on my way to a terrorist meeting with my backpack on, and followed me all the way.”



Who else can help?

Police – if you look on your local police force website, contact your local police station, or ring the police non-emergency number (101), they will be able to give you more information about reporting a crime, any hate crime units or centres operating in the area, and other support they can offer. But remember, keeping young people safe is the most important thing – if you think that anyone is in immediate risk of getting hurt, call **999** straight away.

You & Co – advice and support for young people affected by crime; www.youandco.org.uk

Victim Support – advice and support for anyone affected by crime; www.victimsupport.org.uk

Tell MAMA (Measuring Anti-Muslim Attacks) – the specialist Muslim third-party reporting organisation;

www.tellmamauk.org, tel 0800 456 1226.

StopHateUK – the national organisation works to challenge all forms of hate crime and discrimination; www.stophateuk.org; tel 0800 138 1625

Report-it – an online reporting website with lists of agencies who can support victims of hate crime; www.report-it.org.uk

Crimestoppers – to provide information about a crime without talking to the police, contact Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111; crimestoppers-uk.org

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