

MUSLIM DIGITAL SAFETY AMBASSADORS AND DIGITAL CITIZENS

2021/22 - END OF PROGRAMME REPORT



SUPPORTED BY

MAYOR OF LONDON

CONTENTS

SUMMARY HIGHLIGHTS

PAGE 3

CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

PAGE 5

PROJECT OVERVIEW

PAGE 5

PROJECT DELIVERY

PAGE 6

PROJECT RESULTS

PAGE 7

PROJECT SELF PRIORITIES

PAGE 10

CASE STUDY

PAGE 11

PROJECT RECRUITMENT

PAGE 12

PARTICIPANT OVERVIEW

PAGE 13

PROJECT TEAM

PAGE 14

SUMMARY HIGHLIGHTS

Below is a short summary of the key milestones and highlights we achieved from the project (2021/2022)

867
DIRECT PARTICIPANTS

100,000+
INDIRECT
PARTICIPANTS

7
MUSLIM SCHOOLS
ENGAGED IN 6
LONDON BOROUGHs



28
DIGITAL AMBASSADORS
SELECTED & TRAINED

67
DIGITAL CITIZENS
SELECTED & TRAINED

25
TEACHERS SUPPORTED
& TRAINED

CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS



The programme delivery was completed in March 2022, on time and within budget. We received positive feedback from schools who appreciated the ease in which the programme could be incorporated into the Health & Wellbeing Curriculum and delivered as part of Citizenship.

Schools recognised the importance of engaging students about how they spend their time online and were grateful for the offer of this programme being delivered at their school. The fact that young people now depend on the internet in their daily lives meant digital safety is relevant now more than ever.

Students were able to use the sessions to openly discuss their experiences and provide a greater insight into what dangers and challenges they face. The key themes which represented potential online harms could all be linked to the concept of digital safety.



Potential next phase of the project rollout:

We are planning to utilise our experience from the 13 schools across 8 London Boroughs who have already participated in the programme, as well as a new cohort, to create a Digital Safety publication containing the input of students who have engaged in the programme to mark 3 years of the Muslim Digital Safety Programme. This can be supplemented by student video diaries to create a legacy for the programme.

We are planning to enhance our training and delivery by incorporating roleplaying within the sessions to build on the existing scenario exercises. Our aim is also to utilise our existing relationship with social media companies such as Facebook to schedule visits/virtual sessions for students so they can hear what leading organisations are saying about Digital Safety. Finally, we would arrange for online “upstanders” to participate or speak in our sessions so students have a more intimate understanding about alternative ways to deal with hate speech.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

WHAT WENT WELL AND WHAT WERE THE LEARNINGS FOR FUTURE PROJECTS?



Following a successful delivery to 6 London schools in 2020/21, The Muslim Digital Safety Ambassadors & Model Citizens Programme was delivered to 7 new schools in 6 London boroughs in 2021/22.

Thanks to the relationship built with the programme leader and the lead teachers we were able to communicate efficiently to schedule sessions and complete activities between sessions. We met with school headteachers to develop a clear understanding on what the programme aimed to achieve and how the school would benefit, especially as it fits in well with the Health & Wellbeing curriculum. This facilitated an effective delivery of the programme and allowed us to manage the logistics of delivering sessions to seven schools between December and March and react to any changes which affected the schedule.

Students were surveyed at the end of sessions to provide feedback based on the module delivered. This allowed us to get instant feedback which we used to make changes to future sessions if needed, such as including more discussion time or scenarios.

We also received a lot of verbal feedback from school staff who highlighted the importance of teaching students about the dangers of social media and how best to navigate the various online platforms as this is something not readily discussed at home. Schools appreciated the guidance the programme provided which linked to the schools' ethos of upholding Islamic values at all times – the programme reinforced these values by encouraging students to uphold school ideals even when online.

PROJECT DELIVERY

METHOD OF DELIVERY

The programme was delivered as on-site face-to-face training in schools with some sessions online, due to COVID-19 restrictions affecting some schools in early 2022

LOCATION OF DELIVERY

Participating schools represented the following boroughs:

- **Barnet**
- **Brent**
- **Barking & Dagenham**
- **Hackney**
- **Tower Hamlets**
- **Waltham Forest**



KEY OBJECTIVES

1. Developing robust practices to help students keep themselves safe online
2. Developing a clear understanding/increased knowledge of different types of hate speech
3. How to counter and respond to hate in an effective and safe manner



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PROJECT RESULTS

ACHIEVEMENTS AGAINST PROJECT OBJECTIVES

1. Developing robust practices to help students keep themselves safe online.

The first two modules specifically focussed on training students to develop good habits to ensure they could keep themselves and others safe online. There were three key areas were covered in detail – Media Balance, Privacy & Security and Fake News. We were able to provide a clear understanding of the potential harms young people can face online such as mental health issues caused by an unhealthy media balance, personal information being compromised and being deceived by fake news.

86.4% of students surveyed after the end of Module 2 felt that they had learned a new skill for keeping themselves or someone they knew safe online by the end of these two modules. This shows the relevance of our programme as it reached a high proportion of participants in teaching them at least one thing which they can apply in their own lives and share with others, whether that is improved media balance, understanding privacy/security settings or being more resilient against fake news.

"Students were also asked about their understanding of 'Digital Citizenship' both before (average measuring at 5.8/10) and after the program was delivered (average measuring at 8.3/10), thus indicating a 43.1% increase in understanding of the concept of Digital Citizenship.

With regard to specific elements of the programme, the end of Module 2 survey showed 82.6% of students were more confident in in keeping their information private online and 87.9% were more confident in recognising fake news.

In the end-of-programme survey, students felt their ability to keep safe online went from an average of 7.5/10 before the programme to 8.7/10 by the end, demonstrating a 16.0% increase. Similarly, in spotting fake news, students, on average, felt they were at 8.0/10 after the programme compared to 6.0/10 before we started which is a 33.3% increase.

These figures demonstrate an increased awareness of a variety of online issues affecting young people. While the stats around generally keeping safe online increased by just over 15%, there was a greater increase for fake news and digital citizenship.

One student commented:

"I thought that this is a really good way to teach students how to be safe online and really helpful. Students will be more confident in challenging times and can stay safe online too. I mostly liked about how to find out about how something could be fake news because I didn't know myself how to recognise it them and I learned a lot."

In the end of programme survey for teachers, when asked how well they felt the overall programme was taught at the school, the average response was 7.9/10 with one teacher commenting, "The modules for fake news and dealing with hate speech were very good and engaging. I felt students needed this training." In terms of keeping students safe online, teachers rated students at 4.6/10 before the programme and at 7.6/10 after which is an increase of 65.2%. This can be compared to how teachers felt about the students' knowledge of Digital Citizenship which they rated at 3.1/10 before the programme and 7.5/10 after.

2. Developing a clear understanding/increased knowledge of different types of hate speech

The third module of the programme, titled 'Looking Out for Harmful Content', was designed to highlight the variety of potential harms online with a particular focus on what different types of hate speech exist, the potential victims of hate speech and where it could be found. Another key component of this module was being able to differentiate hate speech from free speech as the former is often delivered under the guise of the latter.

In addition, we felt it was important to understand why people choose to deliver hate to others online as this may be a factor in determining how to deal in certain situations which was looked at further in module 4.

78.1% of students surveyed in the classroom following the last two modules felt they could now identify hate speech when it occurs. We felt that this was an important component and achievement as young people may not necessarily recognise hate speech if it is presented as valid criticism.

One student commented, "At first I didn't really understand hate speech because I've never faced it" and another said, "I never gotten hate speech so I didn't really know what people say and now I do". These comments demonstrate that hate speech does not always manifest itself overtly and may be difficult to spot.

In our end-of-programme survey, the students, on average, rated their understanding of the different types of hate speech at 6.5/10 before the programme and 8.4/10 after the programme demonstrating an increase of 29.2% of awareness and understanding of the different types of hate speech.

Teachers felt students' understanding of the different types of hate speech rose significantly having rated it at 7.1/10 after the programme compared to just 4.6/10 before it, an increase of 54.4%.



3. How to counter and respond to hate in an effective and safe manner

The final module of the programme, 'Challenging Harmful Content', began by providing an overview of cyber-bullying and asking students what they would do if they witnessed cyber bullying. At this stage, we felt we had built up the confidence of participants to be able to know what to do and advise friends or family members on the options available to them. This was followed up by a detailed look at the different methods of responding to hate (Report, Block, Ignore, Counter) including advantages and disadvantages of each method and providing examples of when a certain method would be appropriate to use. The countering hate element was then expanded on with discussions on when countering hate was required as well as creative methods of doing so (for example, Positive Messengers). To end this final module, we linked back to Digital Citizenship as well as teachings within Islam on responding to hate.

63.5% surveyed following this module felt they were more confident in dealing with cyber-bullying and 83.8% felt they were now more confident in dealing with online hate speech.

One student commented, *"I think that the Muslim Digital Programme is very useful because it helps us become more aware on what to expect and how to handle negativity or harmful behaviour online"*, and another said, *"It has really helped with my confidence online to protect myself from things. I really enjoyed how it asked questions about how you feel and everything."*

This feedback showed how the programme encouraged students to respond to hate in a more confident manner and stand up for themselves or peers if they were ever victimised online with a variety of different approaches available to them. The discussions also highlighted the value of sharing problems with peers to help seek solutions.

When asked in the end-of-programme survey about how good they felt they were in dealing with harmful social media posts, participants rated themselves at 8.3/10 on average after the programme compared to 6.7/10 before, a 23.9% increase.

Similarly, students were also asked about how confident they felt at challenging hateful content online with the responses standing at 8.1/10 on average after the programme in contrast to 6.7/10 before the programme. (Appendix 3) This 21.0% increase again showed the content had an impact on students who had spent time online but were less confident in challenging online hate before participating in the programme.

This clear improvement in not only increasing participants' understanding of hate speech but also increasing their confidence in their own ability to deal with difficult situations again highlights the value of our approach.

When asking teachers, they rated the students confidence in challenging hateful content at only 3.9/10 before the programme but at 6.5/10 at the end. Similarly, they felt students had improved in their ability to deal with harmful social media posts from 3.8/10 to 7.2/10 over the course of the programme.



SHARED ENDEAVOUR FUND (SEF) PRIORITIES



MAIN SEF OBJECTIVE

More Londoners actively, confidently, and safely challenging racist, hateful, intolerant, or extremist views and content.

This SEF objective aligned closely with one of the project's objectives "to counter and respond to hate in an effective and safe manner", and as our participants all attended Islamic schools there was an emphasis on Islamophobia and extremism.

Students in particular enjoyed the fact the programme allowed them to openly discuss their fears and about the hate they have faced online.

"I liked how the programme helped us share our ideas with each other making it more clear to pupils how dangerous the internet can be and how often young Muslims face hate speech online and have to face stereotypes every day."

A common theme across all schools was how hate speech existed within the online gaming sphere. We heard around a dozen examples of perpetrators using their microphones or the chat function to make racist or Islamophobic comments to students during or after a game. Sharing these experiences also allowed students to implement solutions from the programme such as using security functions to prevent unwanted users contacting them.

Positive alternatives to hate were showcased in the delivered sessions which were supported by the Islamic teachings incorporated into the programme and the various scenarios that were presented. While the final half of the programme directly addressed the objective of countering and responding to hate, the foundation for this was laid in the first half where we introduced 'Digital Citizenship' and the importance of being a good citizen and Muslim online as well as offline. This meant that challenging intolerance and extremism and standing up to racist and hateful content was not in isolation but one of the many aspects parts of being a good digital citizen.

The data from the survey which showed an average increase from 6.8/10 to 8.1/10 in students feeling they were confident in challenging hateful content online demonstrates the impact of this programme towards the main objective.

ADDITIONAL SEF OBJECTIVE

More Londoners resilient to online harms, including online disinformation, misinformation, and radicalisation

Similar to the main objective, there was an aspect of the programme which dealt directly with this objective, namely Fake News, which again was a strong component of the Digital Citizenship programme. Students were trained to verify news and check facts before believing a story or sharing it. This was backed up by scenarios which challenged student pre-conceptions and demonstrated how easy it is to create Fake News and be taken in by it. These activities were designed to build resilience against misinformation and train participants to question claims - even if they come from members of their own community - and to seek the facts before making any decisions.

The end-of-programme survey showed, students' understanding went from 6.0/10 before the programme to 8.0/10 after. In terms of the individual elements of the programme, Fake News was the area that demonstrated the single biggest change between attitudes before and after with a 33.3% increase.

CASE STUDY

HOW DID THE PROGRAMME BENEFIT PARTICIPANTS?

Case study subject:

("B", Female student, Year 9)

Pre-programme:

"In the beginning, I wasn't somebody who thought that staying safe online was important. I had always thought that I would never face such experiences, but as I explored the Internet, I realised that being safe online was more important than I had assumed it to be. Since those days, a spark inside of me had started to grow, and I was slowly realising the importance of being safe online."

During call for Digital Ambassadors to be selected for each school:

"I would like to improve digital safety in my school environment, by giving good examples of scenes that have taken place in the past before and how they have ended. I would like to display the purpose of being safe online so that people who don't understand much about it can develop a greater understanding around

this topic."

"The skills that I would like to bring on my journey to becoming a Digital Safety Ambassador or Citizen consist of having confidence to talk in front of a lot of people and not being afraid to share my point of view."

Post-programme:

"I thought the Muslim Digital Safety programme was very helpful as it expressed and showed the types of problems or challenges you can face online through a variation of different age groups, along with potential solutions depending on the situation."

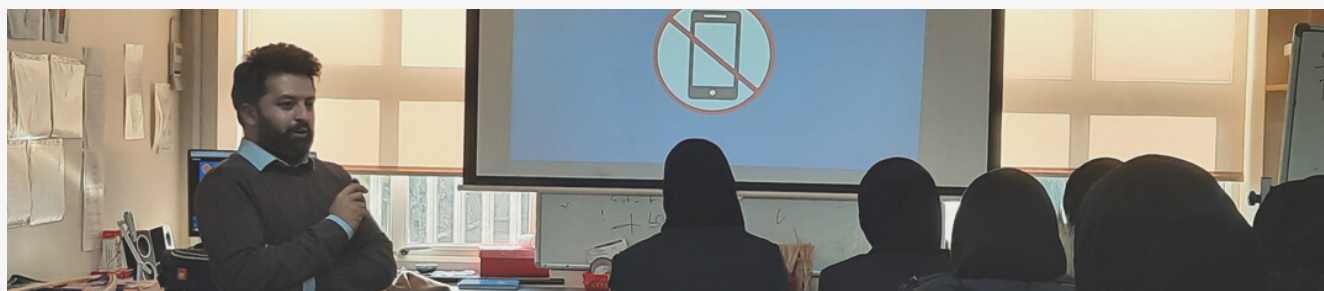
I felt that this is a really good way to teach students how to be safe online and how to be more confident in challenging times. I am grateful that I can share what I have learned to others about fake news and facing hate speech and I have more responsibility now to make sure I am a good digital citizen."



PROJECT RECRUITMENT

HOW WERE PARTICIPANTS RECRUITED AND KEPT ENGAGED?

Following the success of the Muslim Digital Safety programme in 2020/21, we approached a selection of schools across London and spoke to the senior leadership teams about creating a culture of Digital Citizenship through the programme which would address topical concerns such as online hate (specifically Islamophobia), cyber-bullying, Fake News and Privacy & Security. In addition to this, the programme could form part of the Health & Wellbeing curriculum for schools.



Our existing experience and knowledge from our work in the Islamic educational sphere and Digital Safety, as well as information gained from Prevent co-ordinators, helped guide us in targeting Muslim schools in specific areas of London which we felt would benefit from the programme. These schools exist in a generally hard-to-reach sector when compared to other schools as they do not receive local authority funding and as easily engaged by providers. The new Health & Wellbeing curriculum also meant these schools may require support in developing a holistic offer which we felt Digital Safety would be a significant contribution towards.

Schools were very appreciative of the fact the programme would address all the individual concerns under the wider scope of Digital Citizenship which allowed students to regulate their own behaviour online and make more informed decisions even when not at school.

To keep participants engaged, a group of students across all 7 schools were selected as either Digital Safety Ambassadors or as Model Digital Citizens. The selection process involved a questionnaire sent out to all students and consultation with the lead teachers to determine the Ambassadors or Model Citizens.

The Ambassadors and Model Citizens, were selected based on their responses to the questions as well as recommendations from teachers. In addition to the regular programme which delivered modules every 3-4 weeks, the Ambassadors and Model Citizens received more regular engagement with activities on our dedicated online portal which contained the ability to privately discuss issues with other Ambassadors in other schools and ask questions about digital safety. The forum was overseen by the programme leader with supervision from the lead teacher at each school.

The participating teachers were assigned by the school leadership at the outset of the programme. Due to the link to schools' Health & Wellbeing curriculum which is delivered as part of Citizenship, the lead teachers were the Citizenship leads of their schools. In addition to this, some schools also included their IT and Computing departments as the Digital Safety aspect impacted their work. In the schools where we delivered to the whole school group, teachers from various other subjects were able to take part.

PARTICIPANT OVERVIEW

PARTICIPANTS ENGAGED

Direct participants - 867

Indirect participants - 100,000+

PARTICIPATING STUDENTS BACKGROUND

Gender:

Female – 66%

Male – 34%

Age:

0-11- 39%

12-16 – 61%

Ethnic Background:

British:

Indian – 5%

Pakistani – 20%

Bangladeshi – 15%

Other Asian - 13%

African – 12%

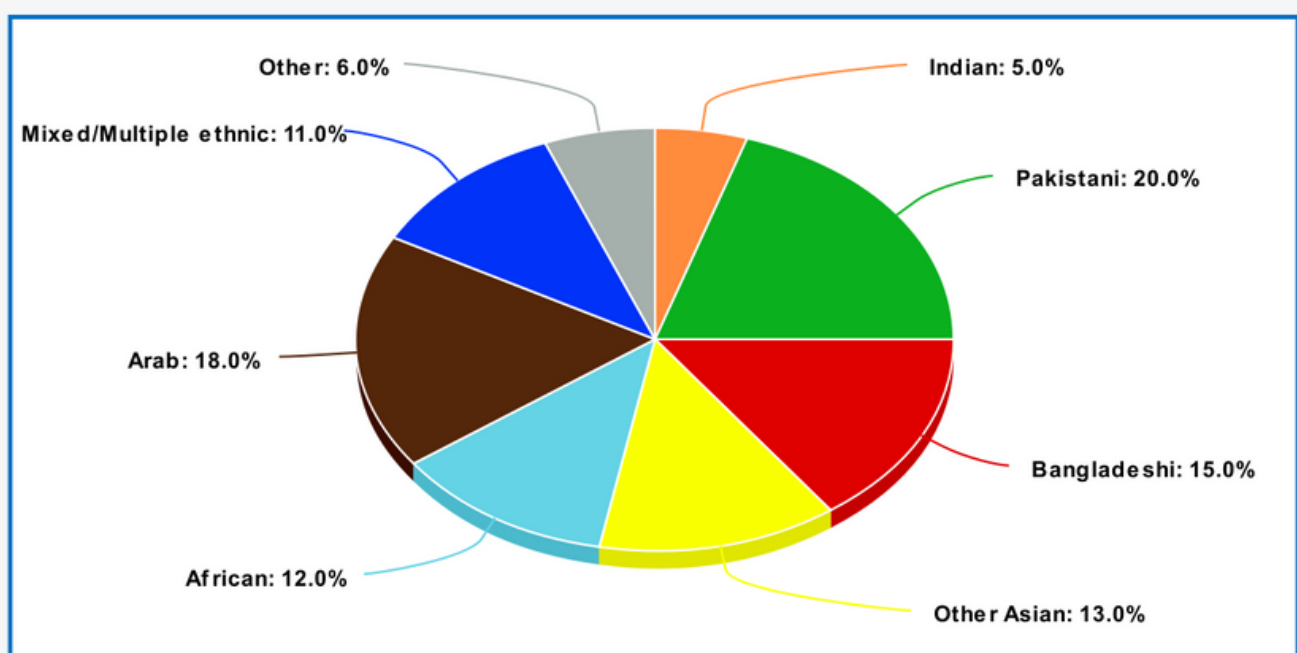
Arab – 18%

Mixed/Multiple ethnic - 11%

Other – 6%



Ethnic Background of MDC Participants



TEAM MEMBERS & CONTACT

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