

Consultation Results from the Yousef Project (Young Muslims):

The Yousef Project – Sandwell Muslim Youth Forum is a newly established group of Young Muslims, that has been developed and supported by the YCA, which seek to represent, advocate and lobby on behalf of young Muslim people in Sandwell. The group is currently made up of primarily British Arab, Bangladeshi, and Pakistani young people but are still seeking representation from young people from other Sandwell Muslim communities.

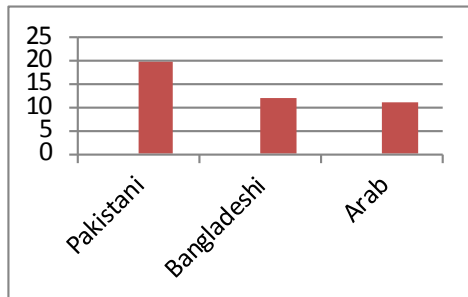
The Yousef Project derives its name from the inspirational story of the Prophet Yousef / Joseph (Peace be upon him -pbuh). The prophet Yousef (pbuh) was a young person when God tested him through various trials and tribulations; however his conduct throughout his experience provides today's young people with a wealth of moral lessons from which they may learn from:

- The belief in the presence of God makes a man's troubles easier for him to bear, and as long as he keeps himself away from sins despite temptations, he will ultimately be successful.
- Patience in the face of hardship is the best of qualities and results in reward from God in this life and the hereafter.
- The importance of forgiving and forgetting the past
- The importance of being fair, equitable and just to ALL people.

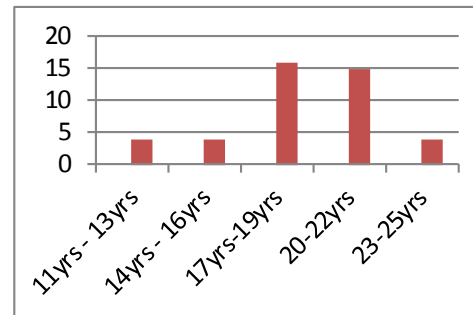
To enable the forum members to be truly representative on the needs of young Muslims in Sandwell, the forum members carried out a consultation with young Muslims on issues affecting them. The consultation was carried out via a simple questionnaire which captured ethnicity, age, demographic location as well as providing respondents with a list of possible issues affecting them as well as providing an opportunity to state other issues. As part of their remit the forum members are required to organise 3-4 debating sessions a year around topics that young Muslims wished to participate in. A total of 43 young Muslims responded but it worth noting that the figures may not tally as some of the questions were not answered.

The following results were captured:

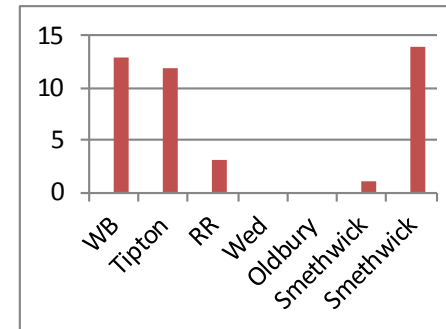
Ethnicity of respondents



Age Range of respondents:

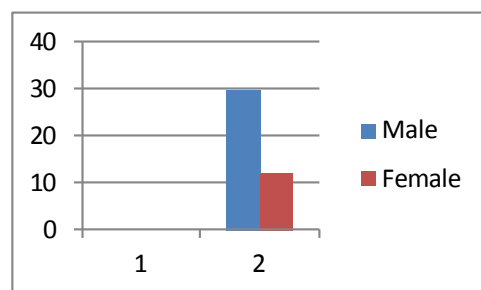


Neighbourhood of residence

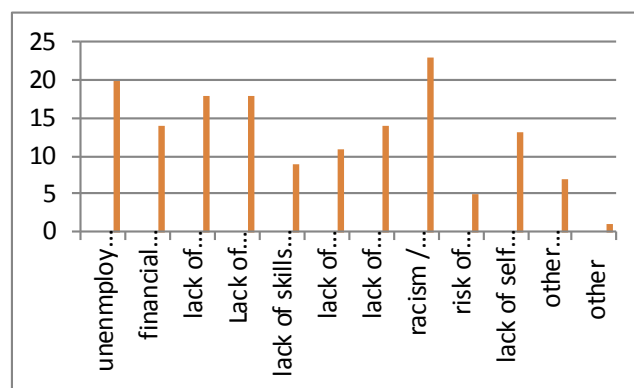


- A total of 43 young Muslims responded to the brief questionnaire with 20 being from Pakistani, 12 Bangladeshi and 11 Arab ethnic backgrounds.
- The majority of respondents came from the Sandwell towns of Smethwick (14 respondents), West Bromwich (13 respondents) and Tipton (12 respondents). It is worth noting that these are the towns in which the majority of the forum members reside in.
- The majority of respondents were from the 17 – 19 years (16 respondents) and 20 – 22 years (15 respondents) age range

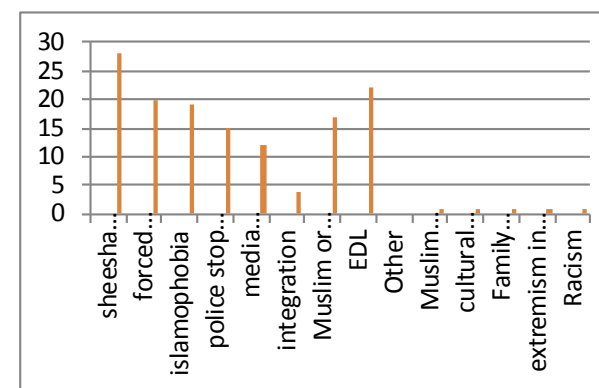
Gender of respondents



Issues Affecting young Muslims



Topics for debating



- Over double of males responded (30) compared to females (12)
- On **issues affecting them**, young Muslims reported that **Racism and prejudices** affected them the most (23 respondents), followed by **unemployment** (20 respondents) **lack of culturally sensitive youth facilities** and **lack of Muslim role models** (18 respondents each, **financial worries** and **lack of places for young Muslims to gain religious knowledge** (14 respondents each) and lack of self-identify (11 respondents).
- On organising **debating sessions**, 28 young Muslims wanted to have a debate on sheesha smoking (please note that the responses also links to the sheesha smoking scoping report that is currently being compiled), 22 of respondents wanted to debate about the English Defence League (EDL), 20 respondents wanted a debate on Forced marriage (worth of note that there is a strong correlation of wanting a debate on FM being requested by Bangladeshi (10) and Pakistani (9) young people), 19 on Islamophobia, 17 Muslim or British, police stop and search and 14 on media portrayal of Muslims. Therefore looking at these responses the debates could be broken into 3 categories
 1. Sheesha smoking
 2. Forced Marriage
 3. EDL, Islamophobia, police stop and search and media portrayal of Muslims

The Yousef project forum are in the process of organising a debating and Question and answer session on Sheesha smoking which they hope will take place at the end of November or beginning of December 2012. The group also want to address issues affecting young Muslims by inviting relevant agencies such as Rights & Equality Sandwell to support them to further assess the impact of perceived racism and prejudices on young Muslims as well as Sandwell Youth Services exploring lack of cultural sensitive youth facilities.

The forum have already produced a newsletter in the summer called 'voice of the strangers' aiming to inform non-Muslims in particular about their religion to help dispel any myths and misconceptions amongst that may exist and are in the process of compiling issue 2 of the news letter explaining the relevance of Hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca) in a Muslims lifetime.