



# Impact Report 2020

**myh** muslim  
YOUTH  
helpline

## Foreword

2020 was the year we felt loss and sorrow on a large scale. It was also the year we showed strength and resilience on a magnitude. It was a year we discussed mental health and wellbeing at length, and across community groups. A year we decided to put our health and wellbeing, and the wellbeing of others at the forefront. MYH took on our biggest challenge in 2020. Our helpline was the busiest it's ever been, with our helpline receiving more than **7000** enquiries. That's a **300% increase** in traffic from last year. The nature of our calls reflected what many of us dealt with this year: loss, anxiety, grief, and sadness.

At MYH, we recognise that people need a safe space to talk about their most challenging moments. We value these spaces as non-judgemental, empowering and non-directional. We want to provide a safe space for you to comprehend your most challenging moments.

Despite the difficulty of 2020, we also grew in many ways at MYH. We accepted the challenge set forth as many more people accessed our helpline, and persevered in meeting our beneficiaries' needs. Our mission to run a helpline that supports vulnerable people in need was required more than ever in 2020.

Thank you to every one of you who supported us in 2020. You helped us continue to run the helpline when our community most needed a safe space.

We're here to support you in 2021.

**Director**  
**Maaria Mahmood**



Joining MYH in 2020 was very exciting, but certainly brought its challenges and changes. Adapting to a new role and environment is challenging in its own right, but like many in the UK, working from home brought its unique challenges. I was lucky enough to join a team that was so well-established and good at what they do that every challenge became manageable.

We've all seen firsthand just what a pandemic can do. Many of us, including our callers, faced loss, sadness, and anxiety about what was up ahead. We also showed strength, cooperation, and resilience to the challenges we faced.

Our callers reflected the struggles many were facing across the world - financial uncertainty, anxiety about getting sick, dealing with loss and grief, and adjusting our lifestyles to shield those most vulnerable and tackle the pandemic.

We worked hard to meet the needs of our callers. We engaged in training opportunities to deal with our enquiries, we supported one another while we were apart, and provided a listening ear to our community. We feel more vital and are proud of what we were able to accomplish this year, especially given the circumstances.

We anticipate many exciting projects in 2021 and would like to thank you for the continued support and trust you place in us.

**Helpline Manager**  
**Hadil Nour**



# Introduction



Muslim Youth Helpline has been working hard for the Muslim youth in the UK for 20 years. We have grown, adapted, and accepted responsibility for providing a sympathetic, listening ear to those who may not have anywhere else to turn. We ensure our organisation revolves around our mission at every level: to offer a safe and confidential space where young Muslims can turn to through our non-judgmental, non-directional, faith and culturally-sensitive free helpline.

2020 was a challenging year for everyone. Our organisation faced several changes as the year progressed. Our staff and helpline officers began working from home, and we experienced a change in leadership, with a new director, chair, and helpline manager all in 2020. Importantly, we also noticed a shift from our service users. We had a considerable scaling up, with a more than 300% increase in our helpline access.

We also noticed changes in the reasons people were accessing our helpline. For example, before the first lockdown was announced, many of our calls centred around family issues, marriage and relationships, and coping with anxiety, depression and stress. While these continued to be issues throughout the year, many of our calls began centring around mental health, dealing with isolation and loneliness during the lockdown, and dealing with family issues while under lockdown measures.

We worked hard to adapt and remain relevant and useful to our service users and the broader community. Below are some of our organisational achievements for 2020.

## Our Impact Points Include:

- ✓ We are meeting our target of calls.
- ✓ We worked to meet the needs of our callers.
- ✓ We worked to aid the broader Muslim community in Britain regarding mental health and wellbeing by providing workshops and talks.
- ✓ We provided a satisfactory user experience by adapting to the needs of our beneficiaries and introducing new projects.
- ✓ We partnered with organisations to increase our national impact to support more people.

## Our Values

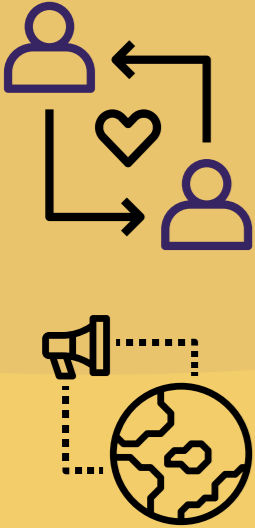
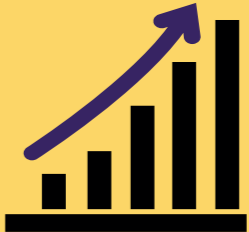
**Non-Judgemental**

**Non-Directional**

**Empowerment**

# KEY STATISTICS

## Our Year in Numbers



# 7,000

We reached over **7000** beneficiaries aged between **11-56** in 2020.

# 34 Cities

In over **34** cities and regions including London, Birmingham, Manchester, Bradford, Leeds, Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland.

# 300%

We experienced a **300%** increase in traffic

# 54%

Female: **1695**



# 46%

Male: **1438**



# 11-56

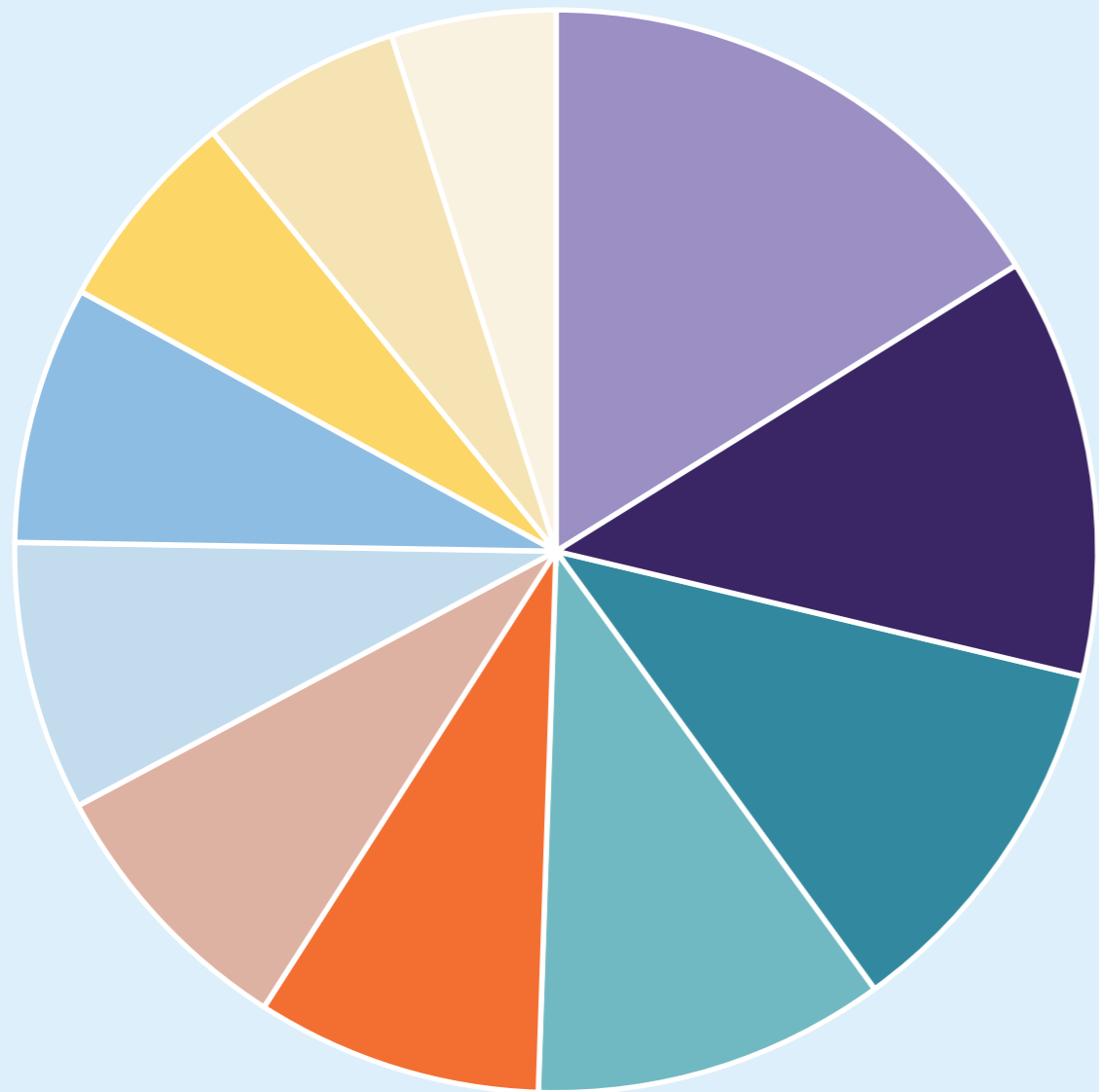
Ages: **11-56**














# Top Primary Concerns in 2020

Figure 1 is a chart of our top enquiries in 2020. Table 1 is our top concerns for 2020, including our top mental health concerns.

Figure 1 - Our top enquiries in 2020:



	Info about MYH	16.1%		Anxiety	8.0%
	Family Issues	12.6%		Marriage	7.7%
	Religious Advice	11.3%		Financial Support	6.1%
	Faith/Spirituality	10.5%		Abuse	6.0%
	Relationships	8.5%		Other Mental Health	4.9%
	Depression	8.1%			

17%

## 1. INFORMATION ABOUT MYH

Young people enquired about volunteering with MYH during the lockdown. They were also inquiring about remit of our service, and whether we could support them, including with mental health and suicidal thoughts. Concerned parents and guardians also access our service for support.

13.2%

## 2. FAMILY ISSUES

Young people expressed concerns staying with family during the lockdown and struggling while living at home. Cases included feeling trapped and increased arguments between family members due to new living arrangements.

11.9%

## 3. RELIGIOUS ADVICE, FAITH AND SPIRITUALITY

Due to our helpline's nature, many young people access us as a first step, when they may be too intimidated to reach out to their local Islamic centre. Some of our service users suffer from religious guilt after doing something they deem to be wrong or sinful. This is often amplified by other mental health concerns, such as anxiety. Many also despaired about feeling far removed from their faith, due to the closure of mosques during the national lockdown.

11.1%

## 4. RELATIONSHIPS

Many callers felt a strain in their relationships, as they were isolating from their family, partners, and friends. Social support was cut off or limited, as everyone dealt with their issues in isolation. The removal of support networks affected many of our service users who may not have had anyone else to turn to.

9.0%

## 5. DEPRESSION

Many callers felt a strain in their relationships, as they were isolating from their family, partners, and friends. Social support was cut off or limited, as everyone dealt with their issues in isolation. The removal of support networks affected many of our service users who may not have had anyone else to turn to.

8.6%

## 6. ANXIETY

Anxiety was also a top mental health concern for 2020, which was amplified during the lockdown. This included individuals feeling anxious about the novel virus and the fear of getting sick, anxiety surrounding job loss and finances, and pre-existing anxiety which was amplified due to changes in accessing mental health services.

8.5%

## 7. MARRIAGE

Many people felt the strain of staying indoors and faced increased arguments in their relationships. We were able to signpost to family counselling and mediation services to help.

8.5%

## 8. FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Financial support was our top concern in November, with many people scared and desperate due to lost jobs and income. This caused high stress among our service users, and the impact was detrimental to their wellbeing.

8.5%

## 9. ABUSE

Unfortunately, many organisations noticed an increase in support needed for those facing abuse. With schools closed, coupled with lockdown measures, it meant many abuse cases were going unnoticed.

8.5%

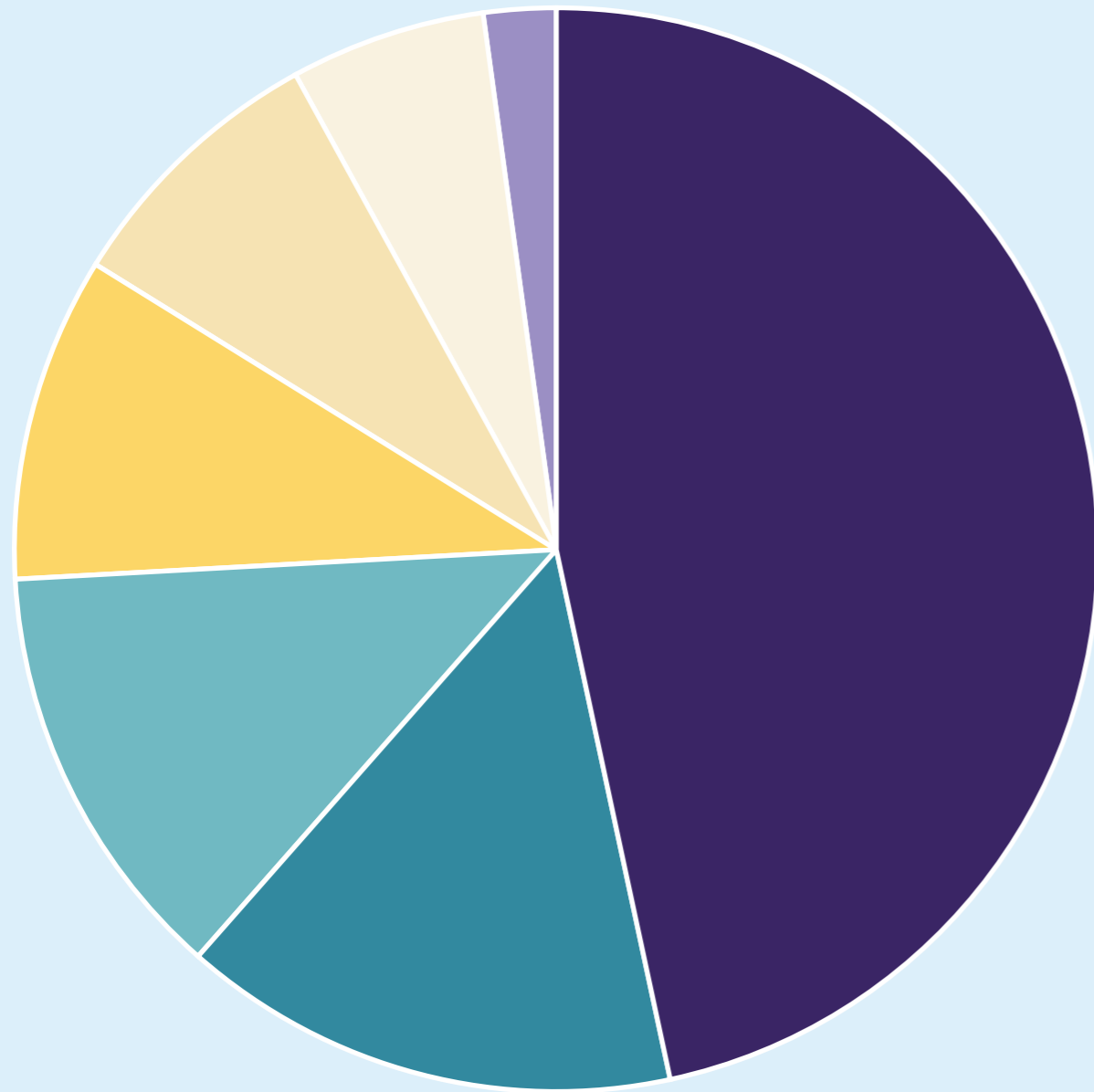
## 10. SUICIDE

Suicide became a growing concern in 2020 on our helpline, with a sharp increase in suicide-related calls since March. Many of our callers spoke to us about experiencing thoughts of suicide, but were unwilling to carry out the action due to religious beliefs. We understood the unique position many young Muslims may find themselves in, and how delicate the subject can be. We aided our callers through de-escalation techniques, signposting to professionals to help underlying suicidal feelings.

# Top Regions That Accessed MYH (2020)

The top regions that accessed our helpline in 2020. Please note, **70.7%** of our service users do not disclose their location. This figure has not been included in this graph.

Figure 2 - People accessed our helpline from:



<span style="display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px; background-color: #330066; margin-right: 5px;"></span> London	<b>46.6%</b>	<span style="display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px; background-color: #FFC000; margin-right: 5px;"></span> East Midlands	<b>8.2%</b>
<span style="display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px; background-color: #008080; margin-right: 5px;"></span> North West England	<b>14.9%</b>	<span style="display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px; background-color: #FFFACD; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Northern Ireland	<b>5.8%</b>
<span style="display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px; background-color: #66C2C2; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Yorkshire & Humber	<b>12.6%</b>	<span style="display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px; background-color: #9370DB; margin-right: 5px;"></span> South East England	<b>2.2%</b>
<span style="display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px; background-color: #FFD700; margin-right: 5px;"></span> West Midlands	<b>9.7%</b>		

## Message From Our Service Users

“  
 Ever since I've called MYH, it's given me a way to talk about my religion out loud. I'm grateful for this conversation. It's making a big difference. Every conversation I've had I've realised something new.  
 ”

“  
 Thank you for listening and supporting me. I would've had to keep things all to myself. Thank you for making me feel comfortable enough to open up.  
 ”

“  
 Calling MYH I have felt so relieved and uplifted, like being healed. It's quite beautiful. I feel repaired. Thank you. I'm grateful that you have given me this time.  
 ”

“  
 I didn't know about these helplines. It's very valuable support. I can see the importance and benefit of them. You've made a difference. Going for a walk and speaking to you, I feel better. Thank you very much.  
 ”

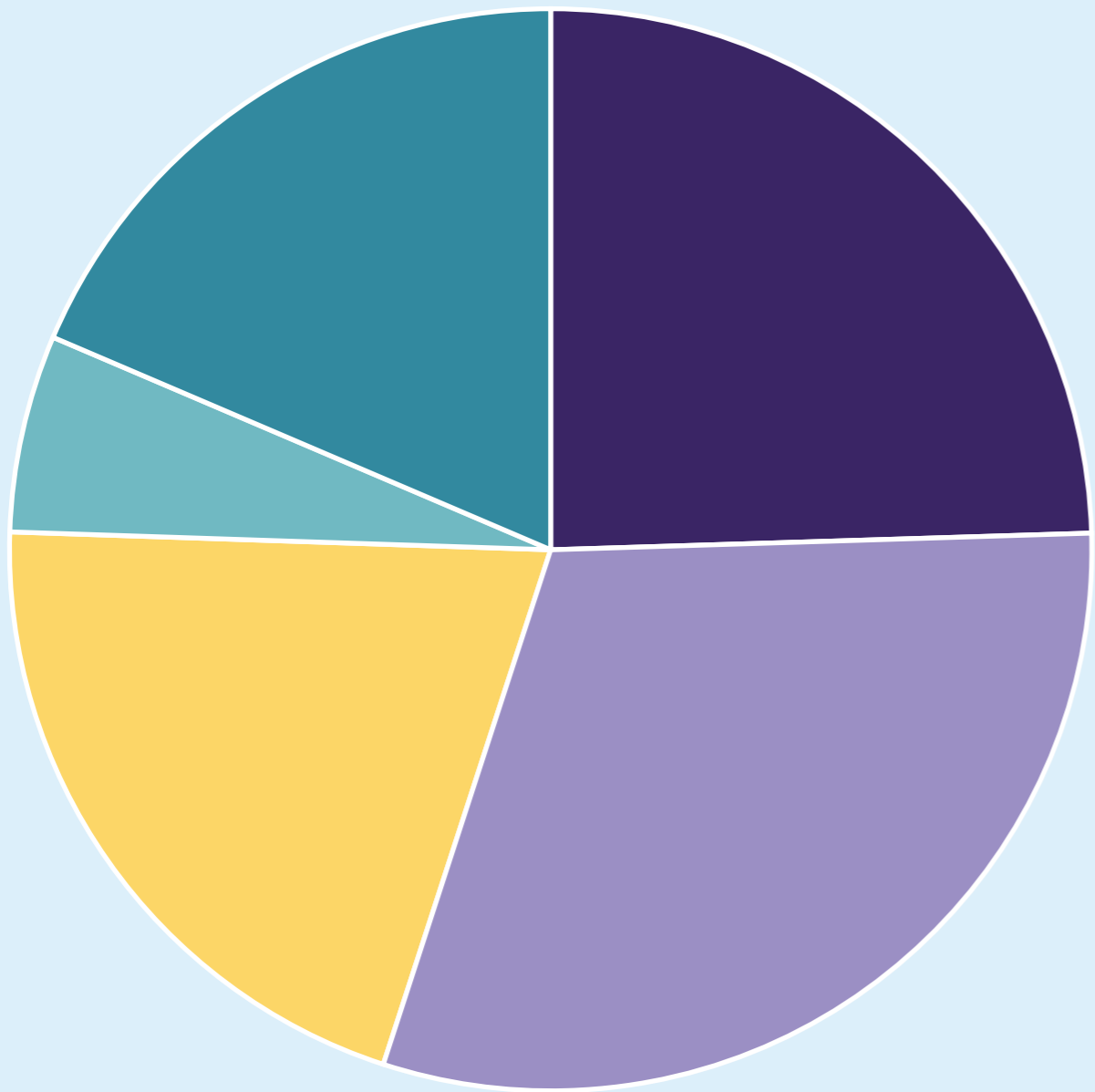
“  
 Sometimes, it feels like I have a cloud of darkness. I feel I can breathe again. Thank you.  
 ”

**Priority 1: Meeting Our Target Number of Calls**

**Total Enquiries (2020)**

A priority is meeting our target number of calls. Figure 3 is our total enquiries in 2020, including those we were able to respond to, and our missed enquiries.

Figure 3 - Total Enquiries in 2020



<span style="color: purple;">■</span> Calls Missed	30.5%	<span style="color: teal;">■</span> Emails	18.6%
<span style="color: darkpurple;">■</span> Calls Answered	24.5%	<span style="color: lightteal;">■</span> Webchats Missed	5.9%
<span style="color: yellow;">■</span> Webchats	20.5%		



2020 has been a challenging year for everybody. We experienced this both personally and by listening to the experiences of young Muslims in the UK. For the first time, our helpline became overwhelmed with demand in calls and enquiries.

When the lockdown was first announced in March, we experienced a **313%** increase in enquiries to our helpline compared to the months before. We did our best to meet this demand and help more than 5000 service users who accessed our helpline, or more than **65%** of our enquiries in 2020.

**WE ANTICIPATE A GREAT YEAR IN 2021...**

With more staff to meet our growing demand and the expansion of MYH to reach all parts of the UK.

One of our early aims in 2020 was to meet this growing need effectively. We worked hard to ensure we were delivering the best assistance possible. For the first time, we began doubling up our shifts, so that our helpline workers were supported and were meeting the growing demand MYH was facing.



We also began recruiting and adapting to working online. We re-trained our volunteers and helpline officers to work from home, worked and met online, and gained more helpline officers to meet our demand.

## Enquiries About Isolation & Loneliness

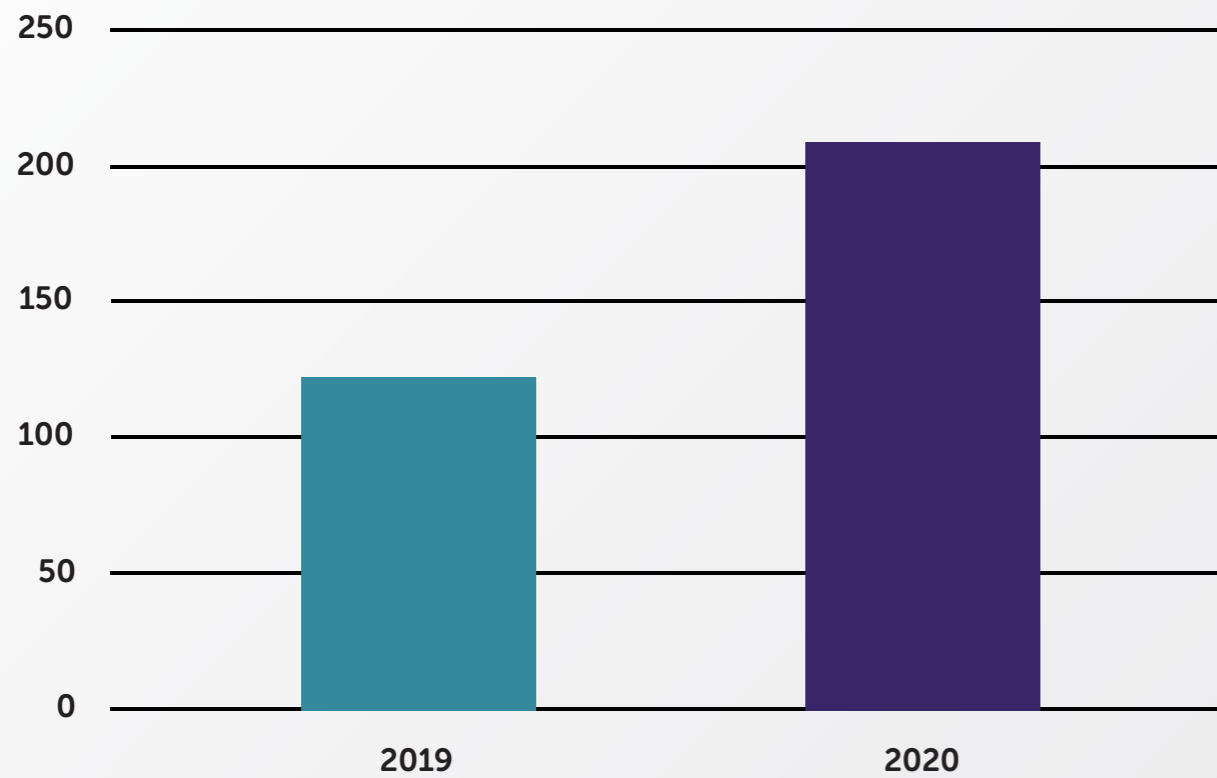


Figure 4 Highlights the enquiries in 2019 and 2020 about our service users' experiences of isolation and loneliness.

## Enquiries About Mental Health Concerns

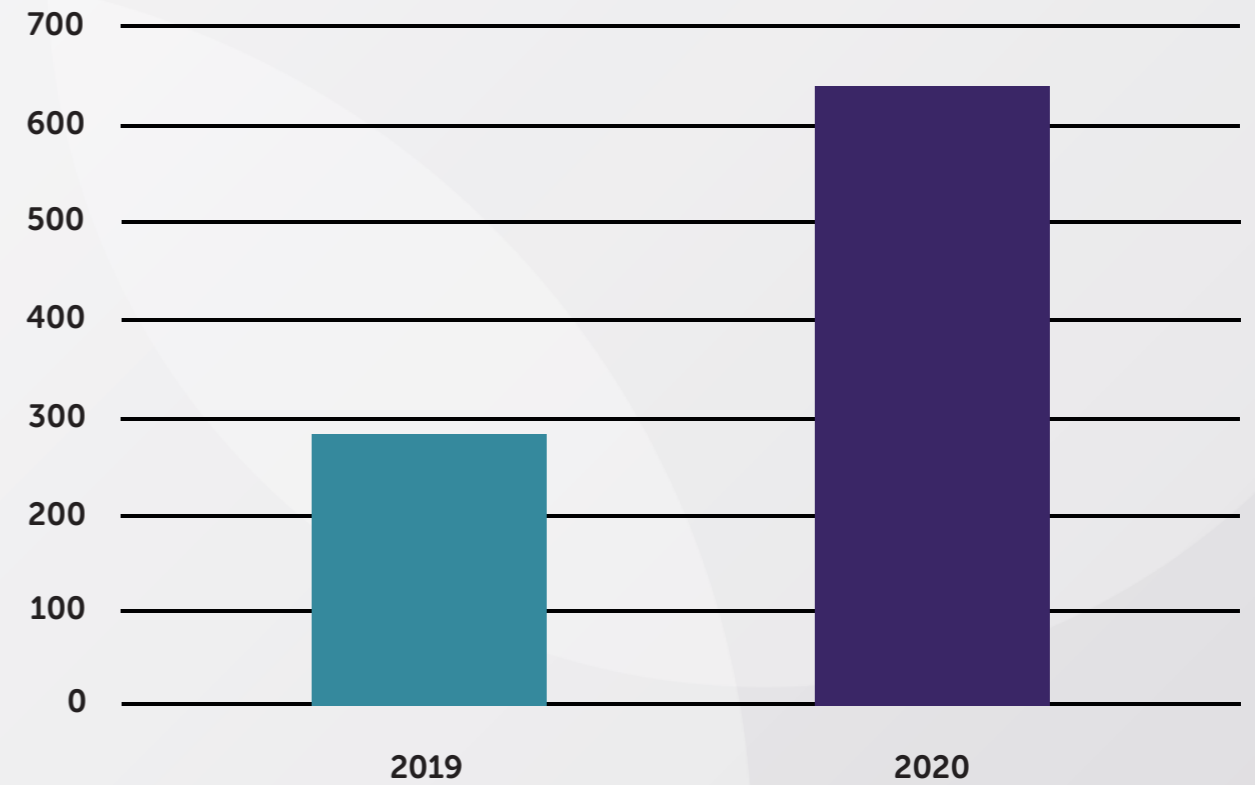


Figure 5 Highlights mental health enquiries in 2019 and 2020, including anxiety, depression, stress, suicidal thoughts, and eating disorders as the primary concern.

We found the needs of our callers changing in 2020.

Our top concerns began circulating mental health - worries about being home, growing anxiety as the future remained unclear, depression due to life changes and stagnancy. For example, we noticed more calls about mental health, and people experiencing loneliness and isolation. We experienced a more than 75% increase in calls about loneliness and isolation in 2020, compared to 2019 (Figure 1).

While we have always aimed to help individuals dealing with mental health issues within our remit, we also noticed a substantial increase in the number of enquiries surrounding mental health concerns in 2020, with more than a 120% increase in enquiries about mental health concerns (Figure 2, Table 1).

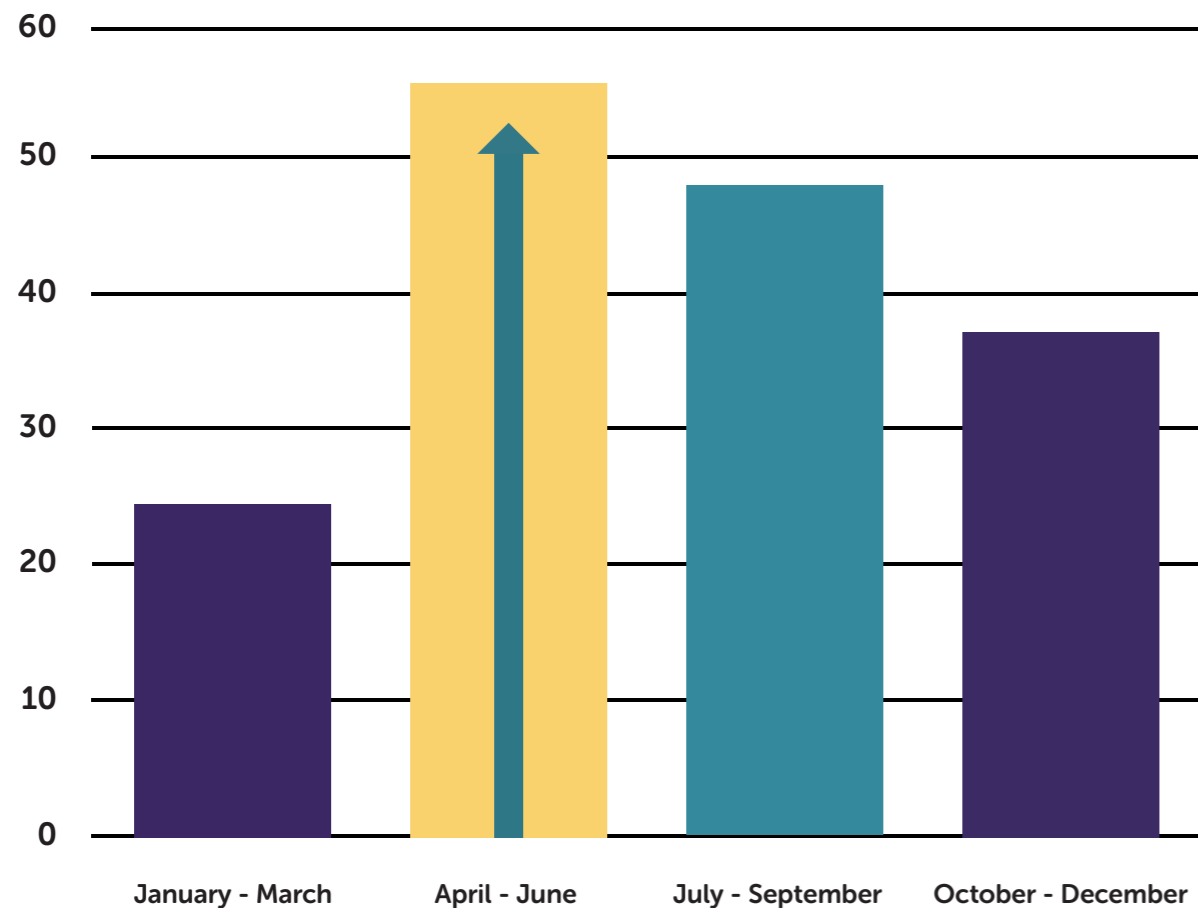
We worked to meet this demand by becoming more informed. Our helpline took part in mental health first aid training with MHFA England, along with bereavement training. During this training, our helpline officers gained the skills and confidence to recognise the signs and symptoms of common mental health issues and how to guide a young person towards the right support effectively. Our organisation's key members, including our helpline officers and volunteers, are now Mental Health First Aid certified.

Before the COVID-19 lockdown was announced, we had approximately eight enquiries per month relating to suicide. During the lockdown, this number more than doubled to 18.6 enquiries per month relating to suicide (Figure 3).



## Enquiries about Suicide

Figure 6. Enquiries in 2020 relating to suicide. This number more than doubled after the lockdown announcement.



To adapt, we updated our suicidal caller's process to ensure our helpline officers and volunteers understood essential skills such as de-escalation, and how to ensure our client's safety during a call dealing with suicide. We also ensured our safeguarding policy was up-to-date, with modified instructions for our frontline workers to effectively contact the appropriate authorities, to ensure the quickest and safest response for our beneficiaries.

”

*“I feel better. If I didn't speak to you, I would have made a mistake tonight. I will never meet you or know you, but Allah is at play. May Allah bless you and your family.”*

**Service User who called to discuss his suicidal thoughts and feelings.**

We also grew our resources and signposted our service users to more organisations to aid with the changing needs. We currently partner with more than 30 organisations to address the needs of our service users. Many of our service users are searching for counselling, but are unsure where to look. For this reason, we refer to both faith-based and secular counselling services to aid them. Other services include child and adult mental health services, domestic and sexual abuse, and financial aid.



# Organisations

Some of the organisations that our service users were signposted on to:



## Priority 3: Aiding The Broader Community

MYH aims to teach the importance of mental health amongst the Muslim communities in the UK. At the beginning of 2020, we delivered ISOC training to several universities in the UK surrounding managing anxiety and emotional problems.

- Brunel University ISOC
- Queen Mary University of London ISOC
- SOAS University ISOC
- LSE University ISOC
- UCL ISOC

We consistently provide resources to schools around the UK on youth mental health. These resources include a student wellbeing guide, which contains information about managing anxiety, the importance of mental health, and self-care tips.

We also worked with concentrated groups in the UK, helping with issues such as knife crime and violence.



We delivered several talks and workshops to spread awareness of mental health struggles amongst young Muslims. This includes addresses at:

- Roundtable discussions with HRH The Duke of Sussex
- Living the Life, Islam Channel
- Ahlul Bayt TV
- MDA Wellbeing Wednesday
- Thrive London Mental Health
- IAM launch 2020
- Our Mosques, Our Future, Muslim Council of Britain
- Muslimah Voices
- Al Emaan, Sheikh breaks
- Mental Health Sustainability Fund launch 2020
- BBC Radio Sunday services

While we would have liked to deliver more aid, we unfortunately had to pause this. We aim to provide more training and resources to the broader community in 2021.



## Priority 4: Satisfactory User Experience

We work to ensure our service users are getting the best service possible. For this reason, we are proud to have created a new website with a better user experience, launching in early 2021.

Our new website is more interactive, with information and resources for our beneficiaries to browse even when they do not want to speak with someone, including self-care tips, dealing with family issues, and coping with stressful school experiences.

We were also able to launch a new channel for our service users to reach us on - WhatsApp. Launching WhatsApp means our beneficiaries can benefit from another secure and appropriate method of accessing our helpline. The ease of access to the app, especially when someone may not want to wait on a web chat or speak on the phone, is pivotal for young people living under current lockdown measures. Our users remain in control and can terminate the text conversation, archive, or delete it to maintain privacy and safety.

We also recently launched a feedback form on our website, in order to measure our service users' satisfaction with our service and to improve our quality.

We are continually listening to user feedback to ensure our service remains relevant and compatible with our users' changing interests.

In 2020, we also began working on our helpline's quality to ensure all service users received a similar and helpful experience when accessing our helpline. While we continue working on it through 2021, we aim to ask for feedback from our beneficiaries, to ensure we offer the best service.

## Priority 5: Partnerships

We are proud to have partnered with several organisations in 2020, including organisations such as Barnardos, Islamic Relief, and Safelives. We partnered with these organisations in a number of capacities.

# 1

### BARNARDOS

We partook in the See, Hear, Respond project conducted by Barnardo's and the Department of Education, in collaboration with a number of charities that work with children. The project aim was to "help children and young people in England who are experiencing harm and increased adversity during coronavirus, by providing support to those who are not being seen by schools or other key agencies." Muslim Youth Helpline was asked to join the project due to our reach and work with the Muslim community.

During the project, we were able to support 598 young people across the UK. We included young people in the project if they accessed our helpline for reasons such as mental health needs, isolation and loneliness, family problems, barriers to accessing mental health support, or barriers to reintegration into education. Our support included, advice and emotional support, signposting and providing online resources that the young people could access to address their needs.

We put our service users in touch with trusted organisations to help with their specific needs. We were also able to provide Barnardo's online resources that could help them with several concerns.

# 2

### ISLAMIC RELIEF

MYH worked with Islamic Relief to support mental health in the community through their COVID fund. Their support meant we could increase our resources on the helpline, by hiring more staff and providing relevant training. Islamic Relief appreciates and understands our role as frontline workers, and was graciously able to increase our resources to continue helping the Muslim community during the toughest months of the pandemic.

# 3

### SAFELIVES

Safelives, the domestic abuse charity, reached out to partner on the Your Best Friend project. This project seeks to empower young women, many who face abuse, to gain knowledge and the confidence to keep themselves, and other young women, safe. Muslim Youth Helpline proudly joins as a member. We will be providing our understanding of the issues young women who access our helpline face and, sharing resources and expertise the project provides, to support our service users.

## Our Plans and Goals for 2021

We have many exciting plans for 2021, as we continue to make essential changes, and expand on the projects we started in 2020. This includes:



*"Thank you for being my support; you are a reminder that I have somewhere to turn when I feel like it's a struggle to continue on my own."*



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