



WITH THE COMMUNITY DURING **COVID-19** **LOCKDOWN**

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During Challenging Times

Central President

FOREWORD



Musleh Faradhi

CENTRAL PRESIDENT

Covid-19: an opportunity to help ourselves and others. We did not plan for it, but Covid-19 emerged. In contrast, our response had been planned for many years, as we developed understanding in our faith about shifting our priorities to cope with such situations when they arrive. "We will certainly test you with a touch of fear and famine and loss of property, life, and crops. Give good news to those who patiently endure" (2:155).

It was no more than a test to be overcome by trusting in Allah. "Nothing befalls a believer, a (prick of a) thorn or more than that, but Allah will raise him one degree in status thereby, or erase a bad deed." (Bukhari & Muslim). Indeed, through these trying times people came closer to themselves, their loved ones, and their creator.

Helping ourselves

Covid-19 brought about the most challenging and testing times in living memory; for Muslims it added further anguish as the Muslim Ummah, waiting to welcome the blessed month of Ramadan, found the doors of their mosques shut, congregational prayers stopped, children's Islamic education closed and the Islamic rituals of hugging and handshaking suspended. Loved ones in hospital could not be seen, funerals could not be attended.

Yet Covid-19 brought a tremendous opportunity to scrutinise ourselves. Lockdown was a challenge, but also presented an opportunity to do things that would otherwise have been put off. This was time gained for the self and loved ones.

The MCA felt a responsibility to provide guidance to the Muslim community, through messaging and electronic media such as video, as well as providing alternatives such as online Islamic lectures, discussions etc. As a result, believers found the calamity was simultaneously a great opportunity. With a positive mindset and optimism, they discovered goodness and came closer to Allah (set), utilising this unique opportunity to attain Allah's blessings in abundance.

Helping others

Covid-19 presented an opportunity to gain Allah's help by helping others. "Allah is helping the servant as long as the servant is helping his brother,"

The virus did not discriminate between people's backgrounds; it attacked whoever it found. Many lost their jobs; many self-employed people lost their businesses and livelihood. The number of deaths increased, hospitals could not cope with the situation and the deaths of doctors created panic in society. Vulnerable people needed help. MCA volunteers came out in force, organised themselves and helped those in need.

The MCA also formed a Coronavirus Crisis Response Team to initiate and manage its response. It launched a crowdfunding campaign through JustGiving that raised £50,000 within a couple of weeks, which was distributed to needy families regardless of their background.

MCA participated in a discussion on the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on British Bangladeshi/South Asian community according to the recent Public Health report. This took place on Sunday 5 July and included a guest list of prominent Bangladeshi community leaders and activists:

- M. Emdadul Haque Chowdhury
- President, London Bangla Press Club
- Abu Saleh Md Masum
- Treasurer, London Bangla Press Club
- Mohammed Jubair
- Secretary, London Bangla Press Club
- Abul Kalam Chuton Community activist
- Dr Abul Kalam Azad Islamic Scholar
- Shahgir Bakth Faruque Community activist
- Pasha Khandkar Former BCA President
- Bajloor Rashid UKBBCi
- Abdul Munim President, BCA
- Mithu Chowdhury President, BCA
- Parvez Qureshi Brick Lane Funeral Service
- Basir Ahmed BBCC, President
- Emdad Rahman BBCC
- Saydur Rahman Renu BBCC Secretary General
- Dilwar Hussain Bangladesh Centre/Beanibazar, General Secretary
- Mahtab Miah Newcastle, Community Activist
- AKM Abu Taher C. Senior Community Activist, Voice for Justice
- Barrister Ataur Rahman President, Greater Sylhet
- Mahdi Chowdhury Bangladesh Solicitor Society
- Eshanul Haque Sumon Bangladesh Solicitor Society
- Selim Chowdhury British Bangladesh Caterers
- Shamsul Islam Shalim British Bangladesh Caterers
- Shahnoor Khan Probashi European
- Yawor Khan Federation of Asian Food
- Mahmud Hasan CEO, Apasan
- Dr Hasnath Hussain Educationalist
- Shahab Uddin Beanibazar Cancer Hospital
- Manchab Ali former Greater Sylhet president

The consultation was organised by East London Mosque. In association with Muslim Community Association, Tower Hamlets Council of Mosques and Centre for British Bangladesh.

ANTI-HATE ZOOM SUMMIT

THE TRIPLE PANDEMICS OF RACISM, ISLAMOPHOBIA AND COVID-19

FREE ADMISSION **Wed 1st July 2020 | 4.30pm - 6.30pm**

Q&A | POETRY BY RAKIN FETUGA **REGISTRATION [HTTPS://BIT.LY/2BZEMYW](https://bit.ly/2BZEMYW)**

MODERATOR

RUHANA ALI
Treasurer, East London Mosque & London Muslim Centre

NIHAD AWAD
Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), USA

CATHERINE WEST
Shadow Foreign Minister (Europe and America)

LEE JASPER
Former Deputy Mayor of London

RAKIN FETUGA
Save Our Boys

DR KATY P. SIAN
University of York

DR ANAS ALTIKRITI
The Cordoba Foundation

MUSLEH FARADHI
Muslim Community Association

HIND MAKKI
CNN's 25 Influential American Muslims (2018)

DAL BABU
Former Chief Superintendent, Met Police

ORGANISED BY

SUPPORTED BY

Our Central President Musleh Faradhi was a speaker along with 13 others - activists, MPs, academics, campaigners from different faith and ethnic backgrounds

The event had 2000+ Zoom registrations and was broadcast live by Aljazeera (Mubashir) TV, Iqra TV and included a Facebook Live interactive Q&A session.

- Ruhana Ali, East London Mosque.
- Nihad Awad, Executive Director of Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR).
- Kiri Tunks Teacher, Ex-President of the National Education Union.
- Lee Jasper, First Black Deputy Mayor of London.
- Rakin Niass Fetuga, Director of Save Our Boys.
- Dr Anas Altikriti, The Cordoba Foundation.
- Musleh Faradhi President, Muslim Community Association.
- Hind Makki, Institute for Social Policy and Understanding.
- Dal Babu, Former Chief Superintendent of the Metropolitan Police
- Nadia Ibrahim, long-standing anti-racist activist.
- Annotate Spoken, Just Rhyme.

General Secretary

INTRODUCTION



Hamid Hussain Azad

GENERAL SECRETARY

COVID-19 has drastically changed the livelihood of every person across the planet, from our health and everyday means of comfort, to our food systems, leisure activities and our ability to support our elderly loved ones. The virus posed an unprecedented challenge to the world we live in and to the structure of society, with millions at risk from the disease or its wider socio-economic effects. Billions of jobs have been put at risk, and access to quality healthcare has become more difficult than ever. The crisis has affected every sector of society, and industries will be crucial in addressing human development and social protection to those who need health coverage and income support.

Alhamdulillah, we felt responsible to start a campaign in response to the outbreak, and the MCA have committed to a detailed COVID-19 response to best address the effects of the pandemic. Regions came up with their own ways of best helping their neighbours and communities. In our second main event we participated in on July 5, we discussed the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on British South Asian communities, as outlined by recent public health reports.

Our Welfare Team set up a successful fundraising initiative, where members can deposit donations to be given as grants to individuals and families in need of support. This has had a

fantastic response from our workforce, raising over £40,000. Under the supervision of the Central Welfare Committee, we managed to provide essential support to over 100 individuals and families, who were in desperate need of support.

I would like to take this opportunity to say thank you to all of our donors, volunteers and well-wishers for their outstanding generosity and support in this unprecedentedly challenging time. May Almighty Allah grant best of His rewards for their outstanding generosity, ameen.

Welfare Fund Distribution

Grants to Help People Cope

Summary of covid-19 welfare fund applications & payments. An initial contact form was set up online. MCA Welfare Team then assessed each individual and an application link was sent to those eligible for grants. These welfare funds were distributed among the needy communities. COVID-19 has damaged every economy sector. It is difficult for poor to earn bread and butter. Unfortunately they can afford precautionary equipment.

AIMS

- To organise the members to help each other materially and spiritually to face the crisis of COVID-19 which struck all parts of society.
- To support friends, relatives, neighbours, and all individuals within our teach within regulations and government explained NHS guidelines.
- To remain connected, release regular updates and disseminate them appropriately so that help and support can be organised as soon as possible.
- The project will be split into five strands each outlining our response, from data management, inter group support, outer group support, welfare fund and welfare advice. Our project started immediately in mid-March and will continue until it is officially called off. Each strand will be led by a committee of at least three people, with implementation through regional presidents. Please refer below to the activities produced by each strand of response.

TEAM

Data Lead: Dilder Chowdhury | **Burial Support:** Ayub Khan
Legal & Welfare Advice: Muhammad Mustaqim | **Community:** Nurul M Chowdhury
Health: Dr. Aminul Islam | **Fundraising:** Nessar Ahmed

Data management:

1. Establishing a chain of information gathering so that information arrives in the centre daily.
2. Making a list of items of information that to be collected.
3. Collating information and passing on to relevant strand for action.
4. Putting all information together daily and disseminating as appropriate.

Inter-group support:

1. Taking the relevant information from the data group.
2. Developing need-based support packages.
3. Recruiting volunteers from manpower for providing support.
4. Arranging training as appropriate
5. Providing help and support
6. Increasing support as the crisis worsen.
7. Providing daily report to data management.

Outer-group support:

1. Taking the relevant information from the data group.
2. Developing need-based support packages.
3. Recruiting volunteers from manpower for providing support.
4. Arranging training as appropriate
5. Establishing partnership work with different bodies.
6. Providing help and support
7. Increasing support as the crisis worsen.
8. Providing daily report to data management.

Welfare fund:

1. Producing a fund-raising brochure.
2. Opening a separate account or put a firm procedure to keep funds separately.
3. Drive fundraising and monitor daily.
4. Set priority of expenditure and allocate budget accordingly.
5. Keep the records of income and expenditure at HMRC standard.
6. Give daily report to information department.

Welfare advice:

1. Research to establish what types of welfare advice may be necessary.
2. Identify volunteers who may be able to provide advice.
3. Disseminate information to facilitate access.
4. Report back to data management daily.

Islamically, it is our responsibly to take a humanitarian approach to disaster, to help and support. Our key focuses are include: control and communication, internal support, external support, welfare and benefit, health and wellbeing and fundraising as addresses by the five stands of response. Communication to reach many more than we expected, who would not otherwise have some help. To address the health concerns of the pandemic, all of our meetings have been and will be digitalised in order to save time and protect each other from the spread of COVID-19. We also offer services to contact the family of the affected and to then help support them as best as our means will allow.

Addressing Health Inequalities

Community Response

TEAM

Dilowar Khan, A D M Yunus, Dr Aminul Islam (Mukul) and Sr Ferdous Ara

The Bangladeshi community is disproportionately affected by the COVID19 pandemic in UK according to the recent Public Health report. Many people in our community would like to find out why this is happening and have demanded explanations from the government. It is an opportunity for MCA to address this very important common community issue by educating and mobilising our manpower and working with other Bangladeshi organisations.

	Activity/Initiative	Lead
1	Organise consultation meeting with MCA regional leaders about the importance of engaging with this issue as part of our Birr and Adl work programme.	A D M Yunus
2	Encourage our Regions to work with Citizens UK organisations in their locality to lobby central, regional and local governments to address health inequalities.	A D M Yunus
3	Consult with all health care professionals in MCA on setting up a project/department to educate our community about healthy lifestyle.	Dr Aminul Islam Amin (Mukul)
4	Hold webinars with our manpower and with Bangladeshi community around the country to promote healthy living.	Dr Aminul Islam Amin (Mukul) Sr Ferdous Ara
5	Engage our community in COVID19 research initiatives.	Dilowar Khan
6	Jointly (with ELM and others) organise consultation meetings with Bangladeshi community and religious leaders to encourage them to take this issue seriously and to work together on this issue. Consider forming an Alliance to work on this issue and raise funds to commission independent research from the community.	Dilowar Khan

Supporting communities

The lockdown posed more social difficulties than just financial ones for the most vulnerable. MCA members took the lead and responded to community needs when most needed. Some of our support includes:

- Delivering food and shopping to those in need
- Fundraising activities and collecting donations
- Supporting local mosque or centre activities
- Supporting people in their application for benefits and grants
- Helping and feeding the homeless
- Volunteering with charities and food banks
- Supporting the elderly and incapacitated
- Spiritual and religious support
- Collecting medicine

Bereavement and burial support

It was an amazing experience to be able to help so many vulnerable people cope with the effects of COVID-19 across England. In London, we had online weekly sessions to support new Muslim sisters, giving them the resources, they need. We followed up with 1-2-1 sessions to assess their situations. We set up weekly classes with sisters who were quiet to make sure that they were coping in lockdown. Additionally, we provided financial support with the following:

- Fundraising activities and accepting donations
- Volunteering with charities and food banks
- Supporting elderly and those incapacitated
- Phone call befriending
- Spiritual and religious support

Volunteering

Our fantastic volunteers worked hard for ten days with Hounslow Muslim Centre to distribute food as needed. Every single day, two hundred people received food. The Kilburn unit distributed 150 portions; Enfield distributed 100 to the homeless, and SWZ collected £300 for Hounslow food bank, while the Tottenham unit fundraised £110 for local charity work.

Call for action

We would strongly like to thank each and every one of our donors and volunteers, our fellow brothers and sisters, for their help in providing support for those who need it. All of our efforts will be recognised and it is amazing to have the opportunity to save lives and help those in need. We call on local government authorities and businesses to assist in our pledge to help those in need during the pandemic, for as long as necessary. We have a commitment to helping vulnerable people in our communities. In spite of the lockdown, we have managed to stand strongly together, and brothers and sisters have managed to continue with their organisational work. We have helped people from all across the country, both financially and physically. In spite of lockdown, we have managed to stand strongly together and brothers and sisters have managed to continue with their organisational work. We have helped people from all across the country both financially and physically.

Financial Aid Provided

KEY:

INDIVIDUALS/FAMILIES
ORGANISATIONS

STAGE 01

Contact forms completed

207+2

Did not meet criteria/not assessed further

72

Assessed form sent to apply

137+2

STAGE 02

Full Applications received back

117+2

Rejected (Has recourse to other funds, etc)

23

Applicants did not proceed

14

STAGE 03

Accepted and Paid: **98+2**

Total Amount Paid Out

10/7/2020 **£40,740**
(£30,440 +£10,300)

REGIONAL WORK

Supporting Communities

The lockdown presented some physical and social difficulties, not just financial. MCA Members took lead and responded within their communities at an unprecedented hour of need. We present a snapshot of the work done by our Members and supporters across the UK.

Note: Some figures are estimates

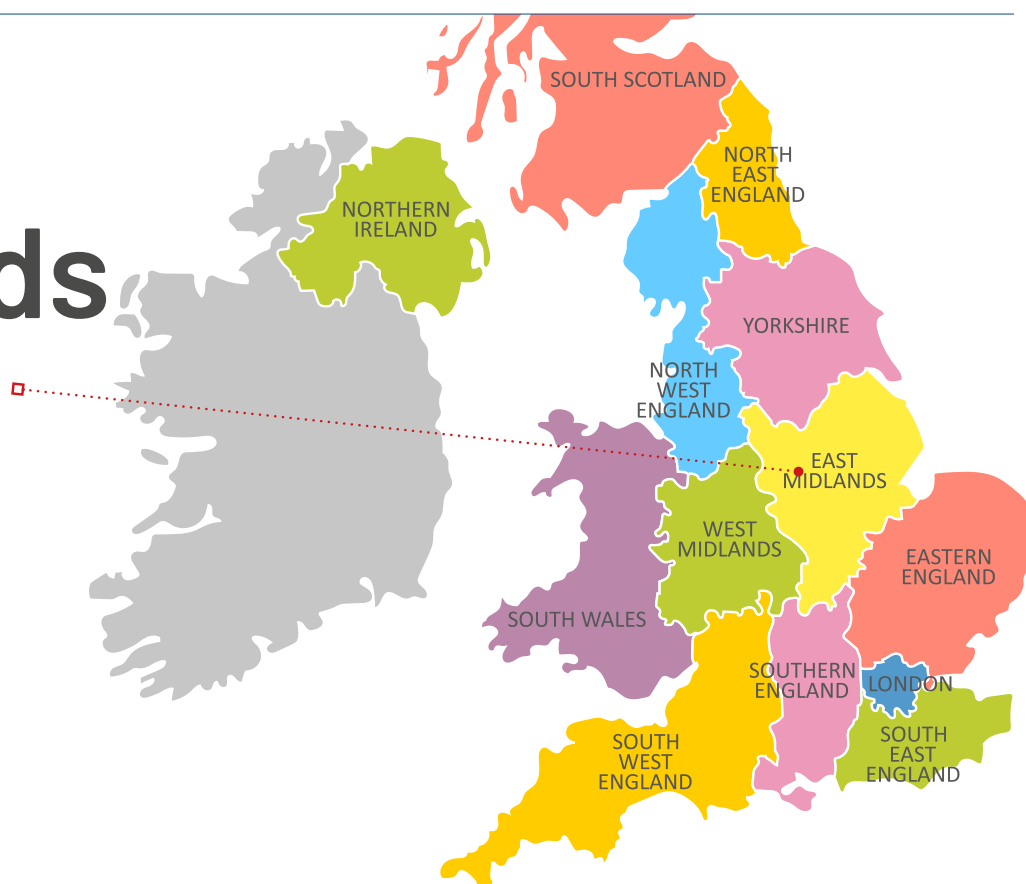


East England Region



Title	No. of PUBLIC that benefited from/received this support	No. of MCA workforce that participated in this
Delivered food and shopping to those in need	200	40
Fundraising activities and collecting donations	900	150
Supporting local mosque or centre deliveries	200	45
Supported people with applying for benefits and grants	25	5
Helping/feeding the homeless	10	15
Volunteered with charities and food banks	2	10
Supporting elderly and those incapacitated	100	20
Phone call befriending	10	2
Visiting	10	10
Spiritual and religious support	20	5
Collecting medicine	20	5
Bereavement and burial support	50	15

East Midlands Region



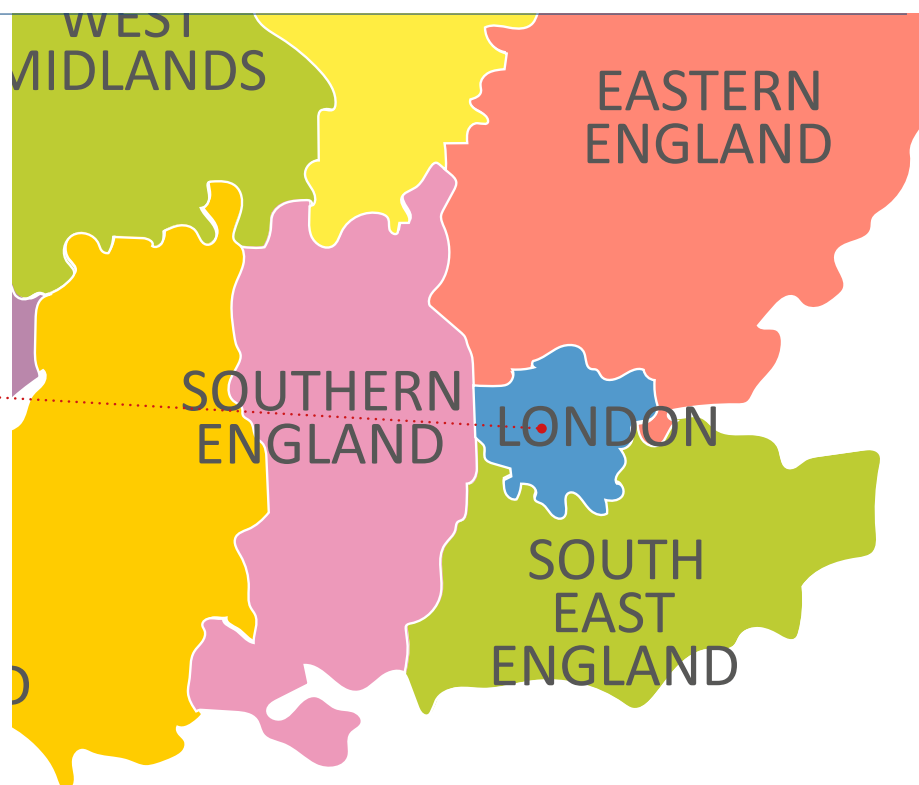
Title	No. of PUBLIC that benefited from/received this support	No. of MCA workforce that participated in this
Delivered food and shopping to those in need	150	35
Fundraising activities and collecting donations	1000	30
Supporting local mosque or centre deliveries	4	30
Supported people with applying for benefits and grants	10	3
Helping/feeding the homeless	50	10
Volunteered with charities and food banks	10	
Supporting elderly and those incapacitated	20	5
Phone call befriending	10	3
Visiting	5	3
Spiritual and religious support	10	5
Collecting medicine	5	3
Bereavement and burial support	1	2

London East Region



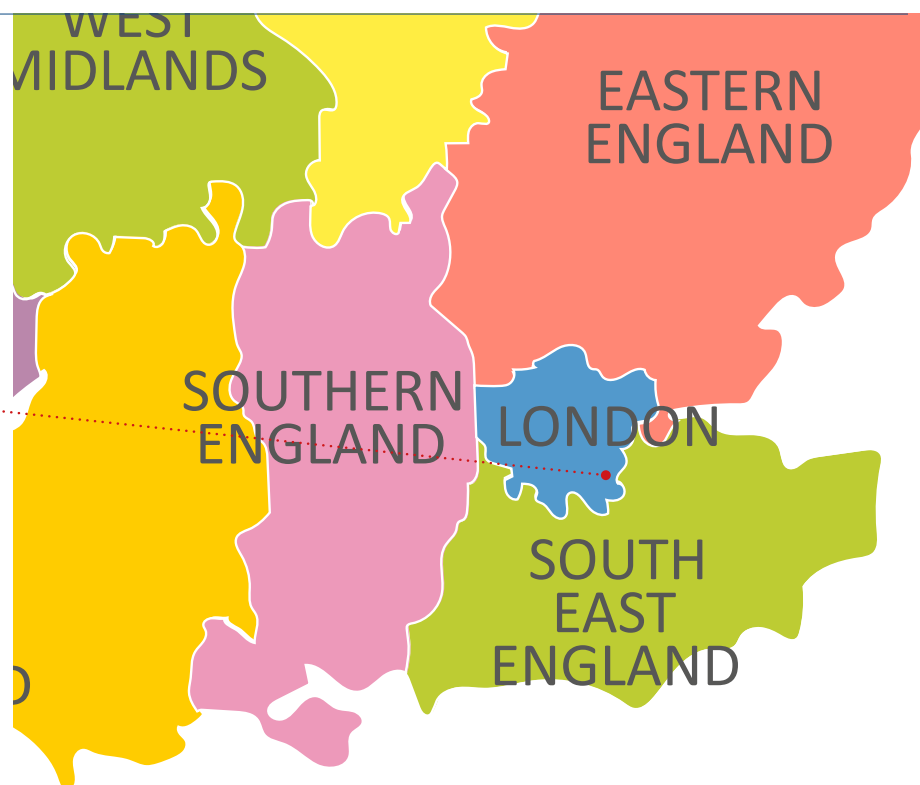
Title	No. of PUBLIC that benefited from/received this support	No. of MCA workforce that participated in this
Delivered food and shopping to those in need	150	40
Fundraising activities and collecting donations	85	250
Supporting local mosque or centre deliveries	20	25
Supported people with applying for benefits and grants	5	5
Helping/feeding the homeless	10	2
Volunteered with charities and food banks	25	10
Supporting elderly and those incapacitated	7	5
Phone call befriending	80	250
Visiting	20	40
Spiritual and religious support	10	25
Collecting medicine	10	25
Bereavement and burial support	4	5

London North West Region



Title	No. of PUBLIC that benefited from/received this support	No. of MCA workforce that participated in this
Delivered food and shopping to those in need	50	50
Fundraising activities and collecting donations	30	400
Supporting local mosque or centre deliveries	37	25
Supported people with applying for benefits and grants	50	57
Helping/feeding the homeless	30	20
Volunteered with charities and food banks	22	15
Supporting elderly and those incapacitated	12	13
Phone call befriending	900	250
Visiting	37	19
Spiritual and religious support	300	100
Collecting medicine	18	12
Bereavement and burial support	15	20

London South East Region



Title	No. of PUBLIC that benefited from/received this support	No. of MCA workforce that participated in this
Delivered food and shopping to those in need	180	20
Fundraising activities and collecting donations	150	135
Supporting local mosque or centre deliveries	180	30
Supported people with applying for benefits and grants	60	40
Helping/feeding the homeless	30	15
Volunteered with charities and food banks	20	10
Supporting elderly and those incapacitated	150	10
Phone call befriending	200	100
Visiting	20	10
Spiritual and religious support	100	50
Collecting medicine	20	15
Bereavement and burial support	30	20

London South West Region



Title	No. of PUBLIC that benefited from/received this support	No. of MCA workforce that participated in this
Delivered food and shopping to those in need	70	10
Fundraising activities and collecting donations	20	10
Supporting local mosque or centre deliveries	1	2
Supported people with applying for benefits and grants	15	5
Helping/feeding the homeless	50	8
Volunteered with charities and food banks	200	2
Supporting elderly and those incapacitated	10	5
Spiritual and religious support	15	5
Collecting medicine	5	3
Bereavement and burial support	2	2

London West Region



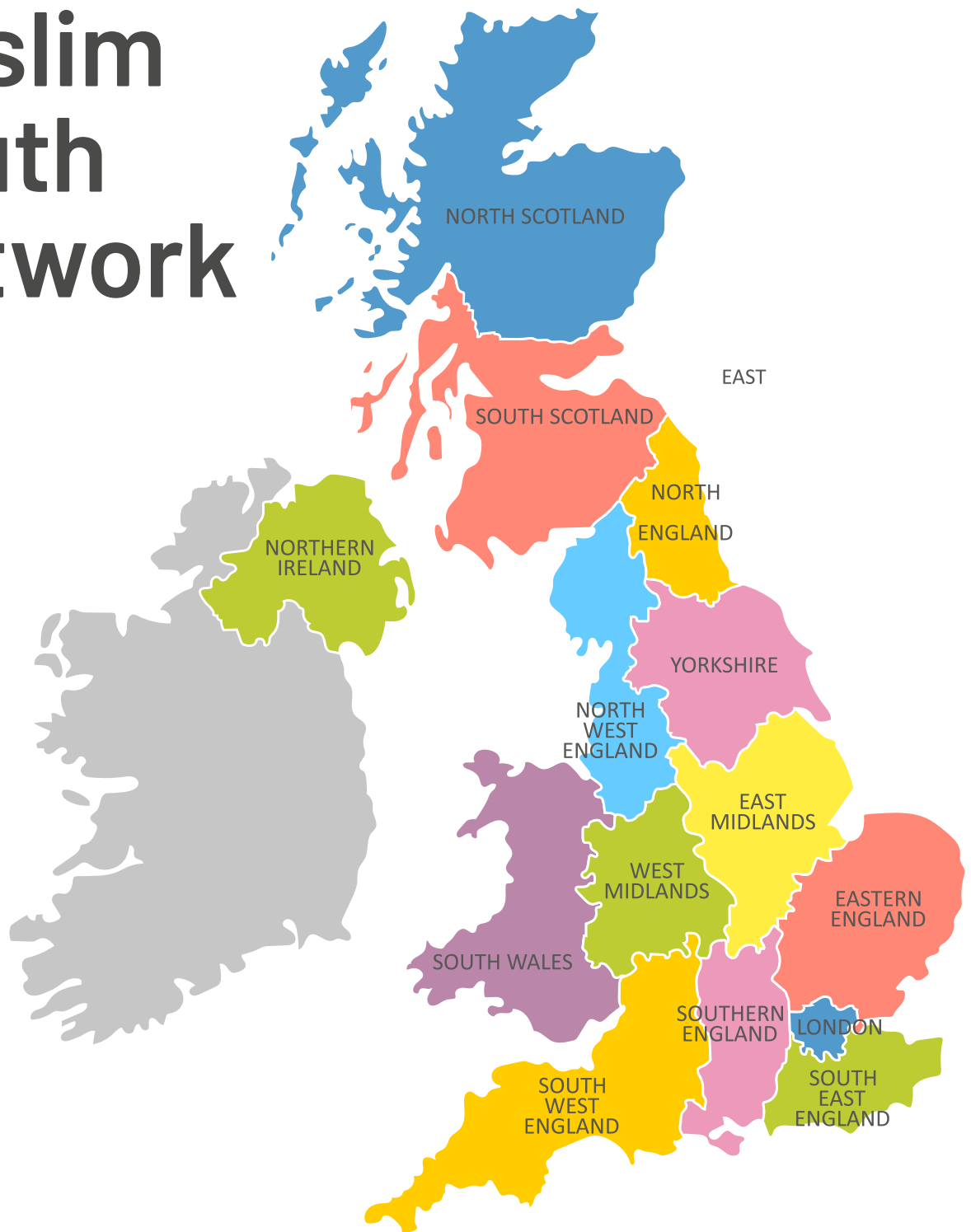
Title	No. of PUBLIC that benefited from/received this support	No. of MCA workforce that participated in this
Delivered food and shopping to those in need	175	8
Supporting local mosque or centre deliveries	50	10
Helping/feeding the homeless	1100	15
Volunteered with charities and food banks	200	10
Supporting elderly and those incapacitated	10	5
Visiting	10	5
Collecting medicine	4	4
Collecting medicine	10	10

Muslim Association of Professionals and Students



Title	No. of PUBLIC that benefited from/received this support	No. of MCA workforce that participated in this
Delivered food and shopping to those in need	20	5
Fundraising activities and collecting donations	100	50
Helping/feeding the homeless	300	10
Volunteered with charities and food banks	200	5
Phone call befriending	50	15
Spiritual and religious support	300	10

Muslim Youth Network



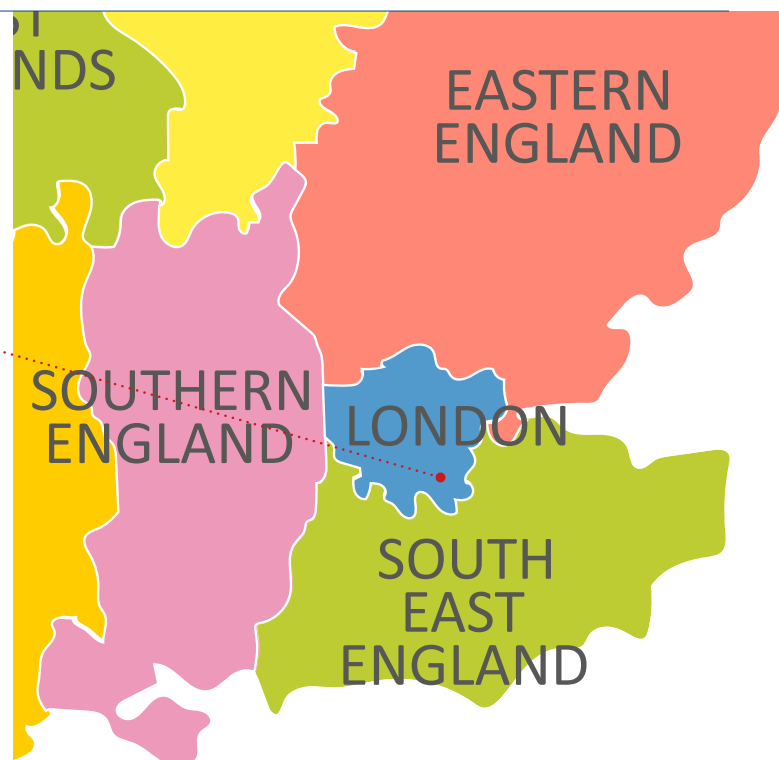
Title	No. of PUBLIC that benefited from/received this support	No. of MCA workforce that participated in this
Phone call befriending	100	50
Visiting	0	0

Muslimaat London



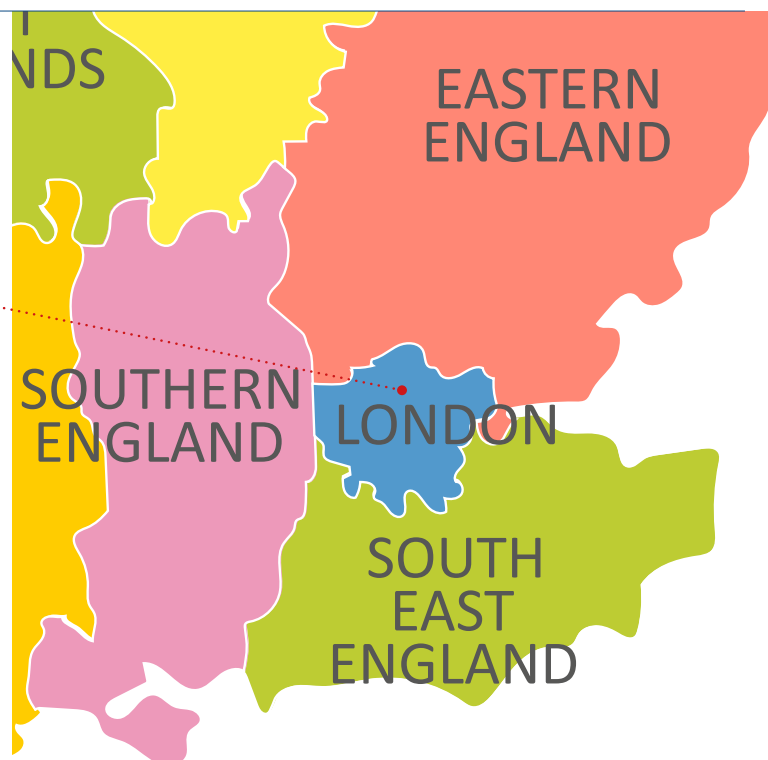
Title	No. of PUBLIC that benefited from/received this support	No. of MCA workforce that participated in this
Delivered food and shopping to those in need	7	3
Fundraising activities and collecting donations	3	60
Supporting local mosque or centre deliveries	0	0
Supported people with applying for benefits and grants	1	2
Volunteered with charities and food banks	40	5
Supporting elderly and those incapacitated	15	8
Phone call befriending	620	60
Spiritual and religious support	400	25
Bereavement and burial support	5	2

Muslimaat Youth



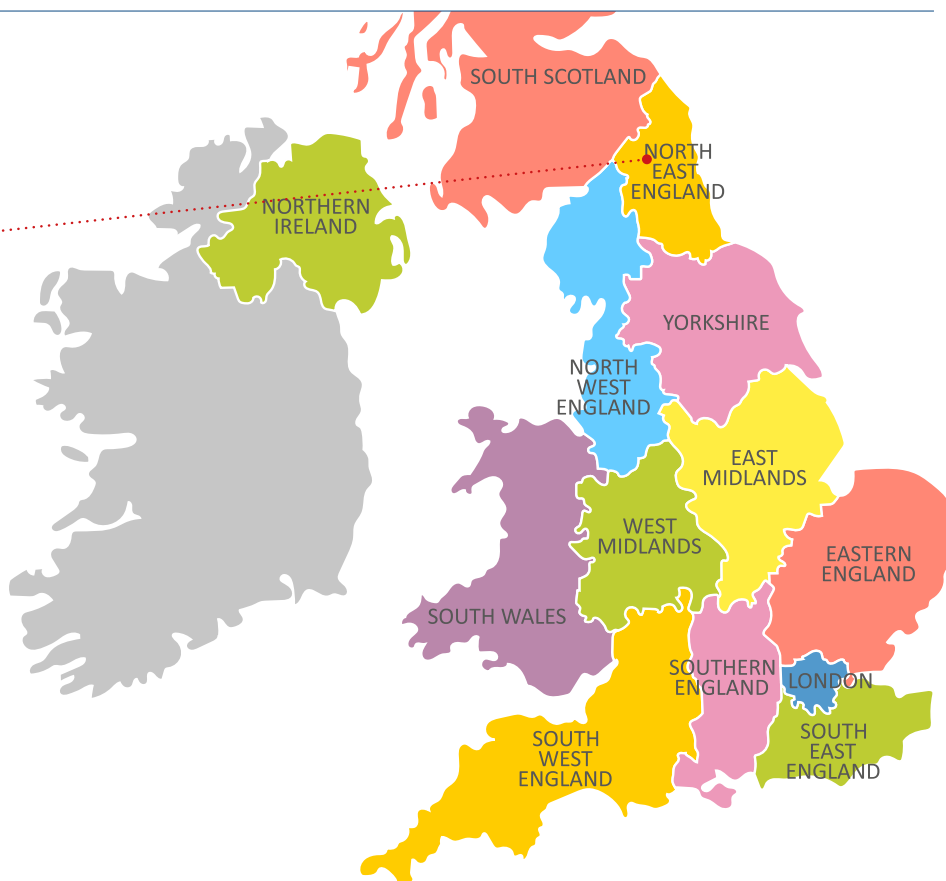
Title	No. of PUBLIC that benefited from/received this support	No. of MCA workforce that participated in this
Delivered food and shopping to those in need	0	36
Fundraising activities and collecting donations	0	36
Supporting local mosque or centre deliveries	0	0
Supported people with applying for benefits and grants	0	0
Helping/feeding the homeless	0	0
Volunteered with charities and food banks	0	36
Supporting elderly and those incapacitated	0	0
Phone call befriending	100	36
Visiting	0	0
Spiritual and religious support	300	80
Collecting medicine	0	0
Bereavement and burial support	0	10

Nakheel Women



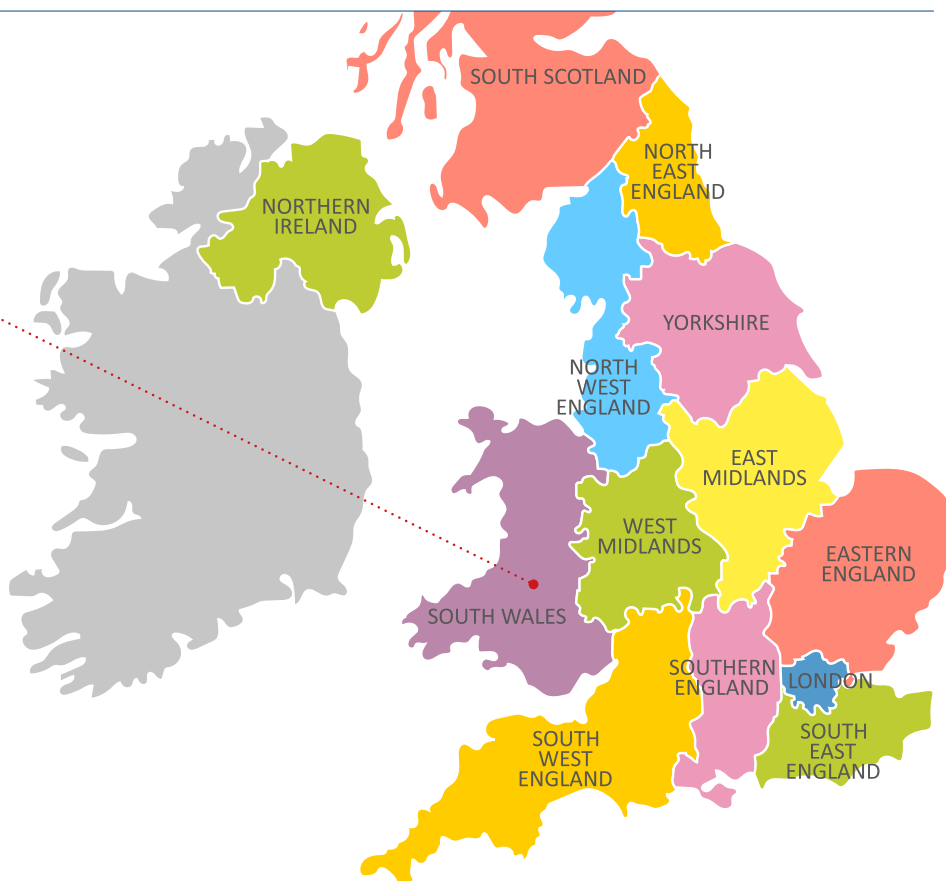
Title	No. of PUBLIC that benefited from/received this support	No. of MCA workforce that participated in this
Delivered food and shopping to those in need	50	10
Fundraising activities and collecting donations	0	70
Supporting local mosque or centre deliveries	10	5
Supported people with applying for benefits and grants	0	0
Helping/feeding the homeless	0	0
Volunteered with charities and food banks	20	5
Supporting elderly and those incapacitated	10	3
Phone call befriending	100	36
Visiting	0	0
Spiritual and religious support	300	80
Collecting medicine	0	0
Bereavement and burial support	0	10

North East Region



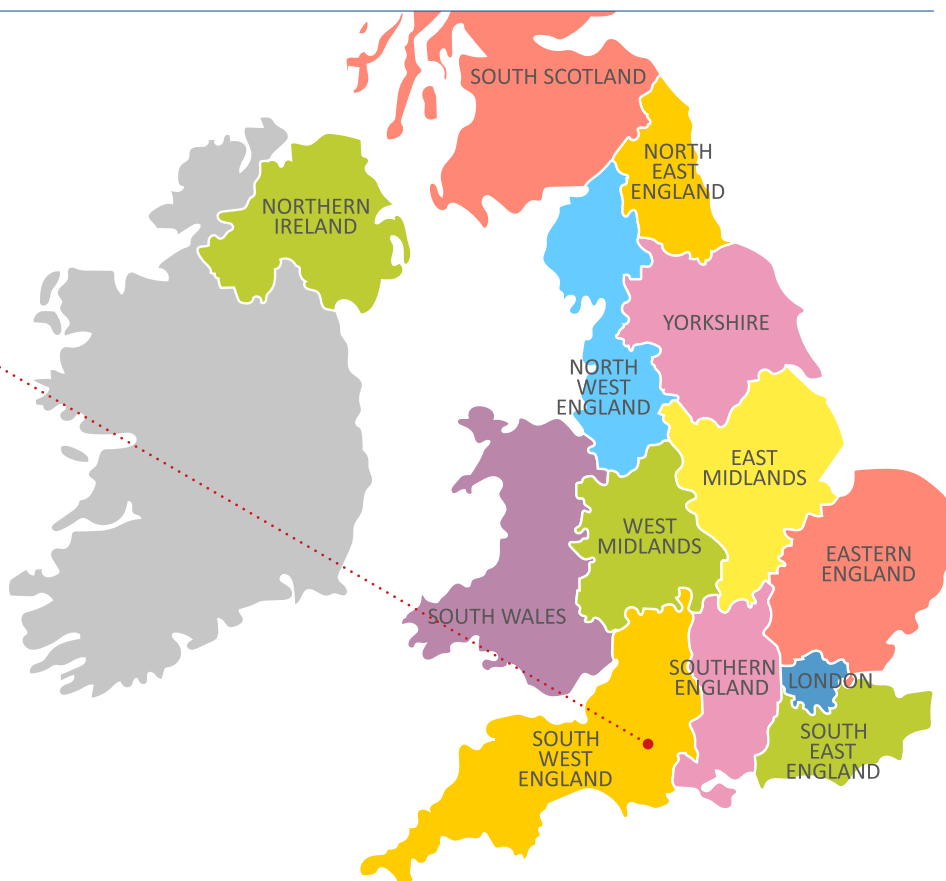
Title	No. of PUBLIC that benefited from/received this support	No. of MCA workforce that participated in this
Delivered food and shopping to those in need	50	10
Fundraising activities and collecting donations	0	70
Supporting local mosque or centre deliveries	10	5
Supported people with applying for benefits and grants	0	0
Helping/feeding the homeless	0	0
Volunteered with charities and food banks	20	5
Supporting elderly and those incapacitated	10	3
Phone call befriending	50	20
Spiritual and religious support	200	5
Bereavement and burial support	1	3

South Wales Region



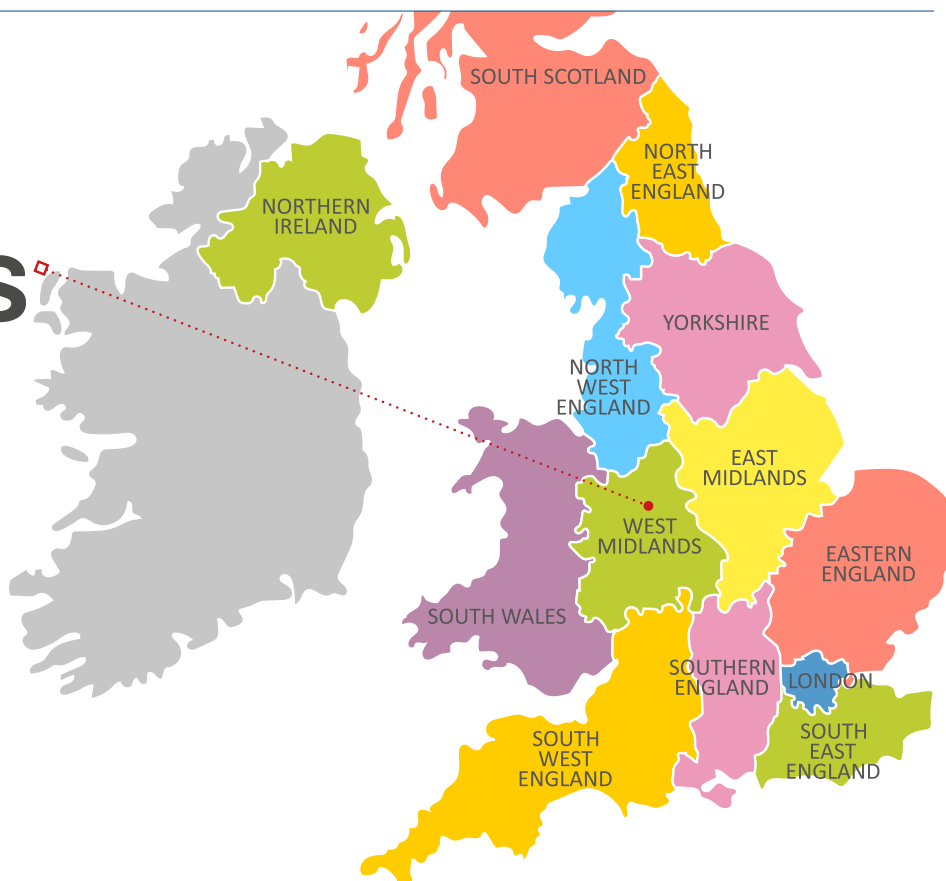
Title	No. of PUBLIC that benefited from/received this support	No. of MCA workforce that participated in this
Delivered food and shopping to those in need	9	7
Fundraising activities and collecting donations	2	5
Supporting local mosque or centre deliveries	4	20
Supported people with applying for benefits and grants	10	6
Helping/feeding the homeless	25	12
Volunteered with charities and food banks	3	15
Supporting elderly and those incapacitated	4	4
Phone call befriending	0	0
Visiting	9	7
Spiritual and religious support	12	5
Collecting medicine	5	5
Bereavement and burial support	1	3

South West Region



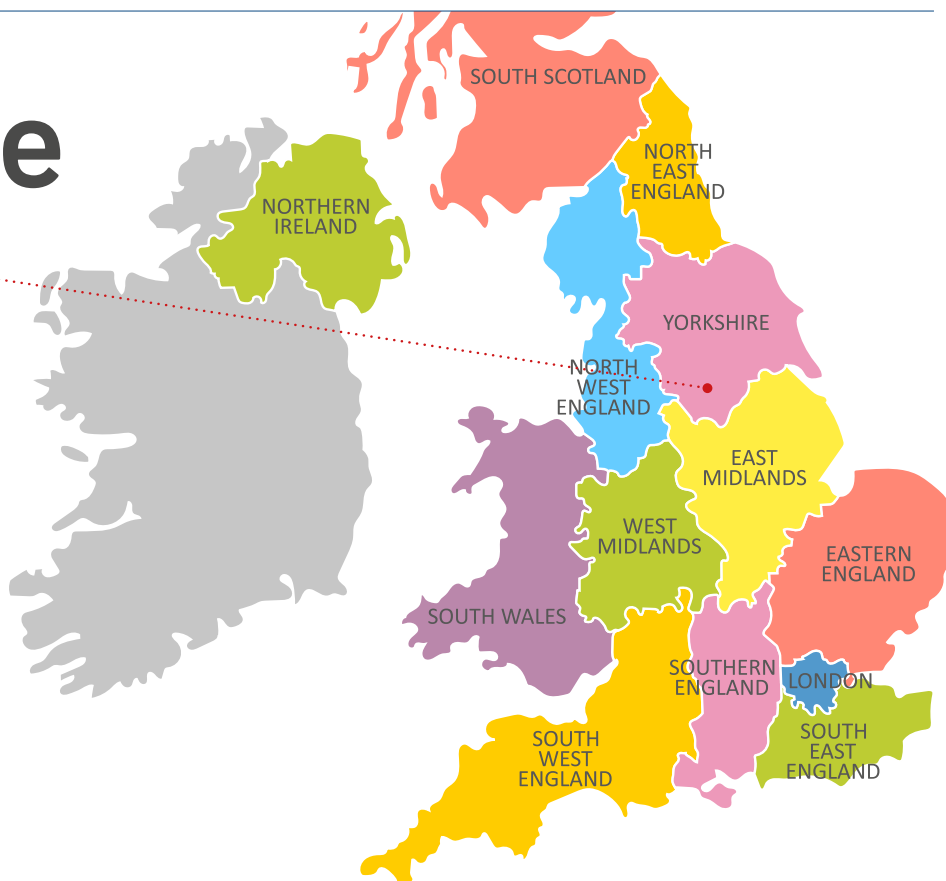
Title	No. of PUBLIC that benefited from/received this support	No. of MCA workforce that participated in this
Delivered food and shopping to those in need	26	31
fundraising activities and collecting donations	31	42
Supporting local mosque or centre deliveries	3	3
Supported people with applying for benefits and grants	26	1
Helping/feeding the homeless	2	2
Supporting elderly and those incapacitated	2	7
Phone call befriending	5	6
Visiting	10	17
Spiritual and religious support	15	16
Collecting medicine	2	5
Bereavement and burial support	1	5

West Midlands Region



Title	No. of PUBLIC that benefited from/received this support	No. of MCA workforce that participated in this
Delivered food and shopping to those in need	200	100
Fundraising activities and collecting donations	0	200
Supporting local mosque or centre deliveries	0	200
Supported people with applying for benefits and grants	50	0
Helping/feeding the homeless	100	0
Volunteered with charities and food banks	0	100
Phone call befriending	0	5
Collecting medicine	0	10
Bereavement and burial support	0	10

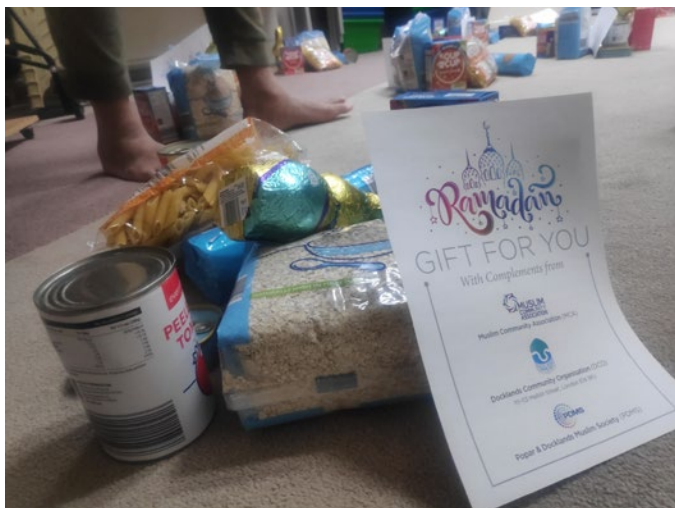
Yorkshire & The Humber Region



Title	No. of PUBLIC that benefited from/received this support	No. of MCA workforce that participated in this
Delivered food and shopping to those in need	20	20
Fundraising activities and collecting donations	500	500
Supporting local mosque or centre deliveries	100	100
Supported people with applying for benefits and grants	20	20
Volunteered with charities and food banks	40	40
Supporting elderly and those incapacitated	50	50
Phone call befriending	500	500
Collecting medicine	10	10
Bereavement and burial support	1	1
Bereavement and burial support	2	2

PHOTO GALLERY

The number of people supported by MCA volunteers was over **12,928**





LIVING AS MUSLIM

During Challenging Times

We are living through one of the most challenging and testing times in history. The Muslim Ummah has been waiting in anticipation to welcome the blessed month of Ramadan; however, by the will of Allah, we are now witnessing something unprecedented. Our mosques are closed, schools are locked, many of our offices are shut and many countries are under lockdown. People are forced to do Khalwa (self-isolation) for two to three weeks, or even more than a month. Thousands of people have died, and many thousands are affected by a deadly virus that we have never experienced. Yesterday we have lost one of our brothers in Italy. Many are in isolation in their homes or in hospitals.

The virus is attacking every country, rich and poor, irrespective of religion or geographical boundary. This pandemic does not discriminate between the rulers and the ruled, the strong and the weak, the old and the young. This is a calamity that has brought many state systems and communities to state systems and communities to their knees.

It was no more than a test to be overcome by trusting in Allah. "Nothing befalls a believer, a (prick of a) thorn or more than that, but Allah will raise him one degree in status thereby, or erase a bad deed." (Bukhari & Muslim). Indeed, through these trying times people came closer to themselves, their loved ones, and their creator.

This is a time for reflection. Allah Almighty has mentioned in the Quran that: "Indeed in the creation of heaven and earth, in the alteration of day and night there are sign for those who reflect/think." (Quran 3: 191). In this critical time let us try to turn this calamity into a blessing from Allah (SWT).

Firstly, we would like to draw your attention to the fact that nothing can happen in this universe without Allah's permission; Allah, the almighty, on more than 20 occasions in the Quran stated that He has the sole ownership and kingship of this universe, and nothing can happen without his knowledge and permission: "Do you not know that to Allah belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth and [that] you have not besides Allah any protector or any helper?" (Qur'an 2:107)

Considering this, we should always have the utmost trust in Allah, and we can test the level of our Eman by checking the level of trust in our heart for our Lord. The famous scholar Imam Ibn Al-Qayyim Al Jawjia said: Placing trust in Allah is half of the religion, and the other half is repenting to Allah; and if we reflect further, we will find that one of the primary wisdoms behind tribulations and calamities is to push people to repent, the Almighty said:

'And We tested them with good [times] and bad that perhaps they would return [to obedience].' Quran 7: 168) Therefore, in this calamity, let us complete our religion and perfect our Eman, by having full trust in Allah and continually repenting and returning to Allah ta'ala.

Secondly, we need to acknowledge that our knowledge and comprehension is

limited. Allah, the Almighty said: "But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allah Knows, while you know not". (Qur'an 2:216).

Thirdly, the prophetic guidance in such times is to be positive and optimistic, having full trust in Allah (SWT) and seeking to discover the goodness that Allah has placed hidden in this calamity.

Fourthly, if we adhere to the above, we can look at this challenge from a different perspective with a positive mindset. Please remember that with each challenge comes an opportunity; "indeed after every hardship there is an ease" (Quran 94:6). And Allah is always with those who adopt sabr (in the face of hardship and calamity) (Quran 2: 153), - "And no one besides Allah can rescue a soul from hardship" (Quran 53:58).

From that perspective, as believers we can take this calamity as a great opportunity to come closer to Allah (SWT). It is a unique opportunity to attain His blessings in abundance if we can utilise it smartly. We would like to share some guidance as to how we can utilise this period of time when we are in isolation, in order to turn this calamity into a great source of blessings from our beloved Lord Allah.

1. This is a great opportunity for each of us as a believer to spend quality time with the book of Allah (Qur'an), reflecting upon the verses and pondering over the meanings like we have never managed to do before.

2. We should reflect on our life and think about all the shortcomings. Ask yourself: what have you done for the Ummah of Islam? What have you done in preparation to meet Allah SWT? How

many times did you go astray but Allah SWT was merciful with you? How many times have you oppressed yourself (with sins) and others but Allah the all-knowing was aware of it? Please remember that Allah SWT forgives all sins if true Tawbah is performed. Therefore, let us make sure that we do sincere tawbah from our mistakes and sins. Let us look forward to meeting our Lord when He is pleased with us, therefore, spend these days in repentance to Allah SWT.

3. Ramadan is very close. Let us take this opportunity to purify ourselves in preparation for the blessed month of Ramadan. Here we have a month to prepare, which is a true luxury for many of us, and we may never witness such an opportunity again.

4. It is a unique opportunity to exercise our role in helping the vulnerable people during this calamity. People are looking for many creative ideas to help each other and collectively fight this pandemic. You have already received many guidance and support instructions to engage in Birr and adl in this period. Please follow these guidelines and use every opportunity to help people with the intention of getting closer to Allah.

5. It is a unique opportunity to spend some quality time with our family. In our normal life we often do not have enough time to spend with our family. Please utilise this opportunity to build close and effective ties with your family.

- Try to have family meals together once a day.
- Arrange weekly Family meetings to discuss how things are in the house, review individual family member's role and responsibility. Share ideas to improve family bonding.
- Try to have Family study circle once a week. Go over a chosen book from our reading list.
- Offer SALAH in jamaah with all family members.
- Contact extended family members on the phone to check their well-being and offer your help.

6. This is a great opportunity to do effective Dawah work with our neighbours. Therefore, please:

- Contact your neighbours, Muslims and non-Muslims, over the phone or by posting notes at the door, letting them know where you live and asking them if they need any help, with shopping or anything else. Ask if they are doing well.
- Do shopping, pick up medicine for elderly neighbours or those without a car.

7. During these challenging times, we must not abandon our core organisational activities. We need to be smart and skilful in carrying on our day-to-day organisational activities. Let us take this opportunity to make the most use of the world.

- Continue organisational activities through online mediums. You may use Facebook live stream or Zoom for weekly circle/Dars/bayan. Let the units know date and time and link. Listeners can interact and give questions and comments as they view. This is a must for those with knowledge.
- Skype study circle: Carry on normal study circle but via

Skype. All participants can talk and engage. Group needs to be set up.

- Continue unit/Branch/region/dept meeting as normal but via Skype or other mediums.
- Have 1-1 contact with members/associate members via telephone or WhatsApp video call.
- All regions to keep log of any members who have tested positive for Covid-19, offer spiritual and moral support and see if the family need any help via telephone or video call.

8. Personal Development: This is a great opportunity to strengthen our personal development. Review your personal status in knowledge, aml and expertise. Identify weaknesses in Quran, Hadith, essential Islamic knowledge and a basic technology and have a three-month plan for personal development in order to bridge the gaps in knowledge, aml and expertise. Here are some suggestions from us:

- Complete Quran at least once before the month of Ramadan
- Complete Quran with translation in the next two months (including Ramadan)
- Memorise at least 30 verses in one month; or one surah (e.g., Sura Mulk, Sura Yasin, Sura Fussilat, Sura Furqan or Sura Infitar).
- Complete at least one major Seera book thoroughly (if possible, with notes). Suggested books: 1. Arrahikul Maqtoom (Sealed Nectar) by or 2. Muhammad (pbuh) Man and Prophet by Adil Salehi
- Try to read Rediscovering Prayer Communicating with Allah, by Bassam Saeh and any good quality books on Akhira

In summary, let us turn this challenge into a great opportunity. Let us utilise it efficiently to attain firmness in our relationship with our Lord Allah (SWT), to gain His promised blessings in this Dunya and in the Akhirah as well, as He says: "Indeed, those who have said, "Our Lord is Allah "and then remained on a right course - the angels will descend upon them, [saying], "Do not fear and do not grieve but receive good tidings of Paradise, which you were promised. We [angels] were your allies in worldly life and [are so] in the Hereafter. And you will have therein whatever your souls desire, and you will have therein whatever you request [or wish]. As accommodation from a [Lord who is] Forgiving and Merciful." (Quran- 30-32).

Let us be sincere, focused and spend our time in what will benefit us when we meet with Allah SWT. We ask Allah to remove this calamity upon the Ummah of Islam and the entire humanity Ameen.

MCA Editorial Team

