

Bringing Unity to the Response Against Covid-19

Dr Muhammad Wajid Akhter, *GP, London; BIMA, Vice President*

Correspondence: muhammad.wajid.akhter@gmail.com

The Muslim community is riven with disunity. This is not news to anyone. Whether we look at it from an organisational level, community perspective, the mosques or even the scholars - disunity is so prevalent that it is seen as a fact of life by all of us.

This situation is intolerable and unacceptable at the best of times, but during a medical emergency - it becomes the cause of mass deaths and suffering. This is exactly the situation we found ourselves in as this pandemic spread.

Key medical messages were being drowned out by voices online who felt that an expertise in religious or political sciences meant they could also extrapolate to medical situations. Others felt that the Government advice must be strictly followed not factoring in that Governments could miscalculate badly or have other imperatives such economic and public order.

Along with this, there was genuine misinformation being spread and scare-mongering was leading to a situation where we were all collectively panicking and only a few were actively doing something proactive about it.

It was in this situation that we felt it necessary to run the Muslim communities response to the pandemic as you would any medical emergency or resus. With clear delineation of activities according to speciality, with clear leadership based on merit and with clear communication between all parties working to an agreed plan and protocol. Only then would we have a chance.

This is how the COVID Response Groups (CRG) were born. There is one for the Medical community to provide clear expert medical and clinical advice that is specific to our community. There is a Mental Health CRG that brings together organisations that focus on psychological well being like Inspired Minds, Muslim Youth Helpline and the MCAPN.

Other CRG's included the Burial CRG, the Economic Impact CRG, the Charities CRG, Publicity CRG and finally a National level CRG lead by the major umbrella body of the Muslim community in the UK - the MCB.

By allowing all specialist organisations to focus on their speciality, we were able to build on our strengths and mitigate our weaknesses. In short, we were able to start functioning as a team rather than individual players.

This is a medical disaster and it needs to be run with the clinical skill and surgical precision of one. Pandemics kill, but disunity in the response to it kills more.