



Category: Education Campaign

Company: Children's Commissioner for Wales

Entry title: Tackling Islamophobia

Brief and objectives:

The Children's Commissioner heard directly from young Muslims from all over Wales who are often abused, demeaned and threatened because of their faith.

Research also shows that religious hate crime has risen in previous years, and that Muslims are more likely to be affected than any other religious group.

We wanted to raise awareness of the harmfulness of Islamophobia and encourage all children and young people to be able to recognise negative stereotyping of Muslims in the media, which we had identified as major factor behind Islamophobic abuse.

We decided that, in order to achieve our aim of challenging negative stereotypes of Muslims and raising awareness of Islamophobia in Wales, we needed to:

- Create a resource for secondary schools that allowed pupils to explore the topic
- Ensure resource had clear links to the Welsh Government's Literacy and Numeracy Framework and Digital Literacy Framework for schools
- Create videos to share the direct experiences of young Muslims with their peers from across Wales
- Encourage pupils to identify and challenge harmful media portrayals
- Help pupils to understand the harmfulness of racist abuse
- Help pupils to celebrate the commonalities between all people
- Help pupils to understand that Islamophobia is not an issue limited to places far away: it is an issue that affects young people in Wales as well as all over the world.

Our measurable project objectives included:

Outputs

- 500 downloads of resource

- 1000 views of the online films

Out-takes

- 15 pieces of positive media coverage for new resource

Outcomes

- 60% of reflection guides returned to us show an increased awareness of negative stereotyping of Muslims

Budget: 1k

Rationale behind campaign, including research and planning:

We met with young Muslims who told us that:

- They were tired of how Muslims are portrayed in mainstream media and worried about how this translates to their day-to-day lives
- They wanted their non-Muslim peers to understand the true meaning of Islam; to spread love and peace

We met with staff at the Ethnic Youth Support Team in Swansea and Show Racism the Red Card in Cardiff. Their advice echoed the views of the young Muslims in our focus groups; Islamophobia was a growing concern and any material to support awareness raising was to be welcomed.

We also met with a group of senior teaching staff from five secondary schools. They told us that the resource needed to be interesting and flexible, and that the Welsh language should be used to reflect the fact that Muslims in Wales can be as 'Welsh' as any other citizen, and that Islamophobia is an issue in Wales.

Strategy and tactics, including creativity and innovation:

We wanted the voices of young Welsh Muslims to be at the heart of this work; to give them a platform to have their say on how their religion is portrayed and how sensationalised negativity surrounding it can translate to real-life experiences.

We also wanted to celebrate difference, promote equality, and create a conversation where schools and public bodies could share their messages around this topic.

Implementation of tactics:

Films

We created 4 films with young Muslims to use in the resource, to share on social media, and to send to news outlets.

- Experiences of Islamophobia: this video showed young Muslims describing their experiences of being racially abused and the impact this had on them and their

families. Its purpose was to show pupils how Islamophobia can affect another person.

- What Islam means to me: this video gave young Muslims the opportunity to describe Islam in their own words; an opportunity not often afforded to Muslims by mainstream media.
- Media Portrayals: in this video young Muslims talked about their frustration at negative media portrayals and how it impacts their day-to-day lives, making pupils consider the accuracy of reports they read or see in the future.
- Hobbies: this lighter video includes young Muslims simply talking about their hobbies. Its aim was to show pupils that we do indeed have 'more in common than which divides us'.

The videos were accompanied by a full written resource, available on our website, that gave teachers three structured lesson plans to build effective and sensitive conversations around the four videos.

The films contained Welsh-speaking young Muslims, emphasising the message that Islamophobia takes place in Wales as well as elsewhere.

Broadcast, Print and Online

We secured coverage on Radio Wales, Radio Cymru, Heart FM, Wales Today, Newyddion, ITV News Wales, Western Mail and Wales Online on the day the resource was published.

Our films were featured on Wales Online, Wales Today, and ITV News Wales.

The resource, and the case studies in our films, were also featured across all regional radio stations in England, broadening the reach of the work.

Letter to schools

We wrote a letter to all secondary schools in Wales outlining the problem of Islamophobia in Wales, the experiences of the young people we'd engaged with, and how the resource links to elements of the curriculum.

Events

We delivered presentations on the resource at 4 national conferences for teaching staff and pupils.

#OurWales / #EinCymru

We invited schools and public sector bodies in Wales to share messages using the hashtag #OurWales/#EinCymru on St.David's Day to celebrate diversity and equality.

Measurement and evaluation:

Outputs

- 1274 downloads of resource
- 4674 video views

- 692,000 reach of the #OurWales/#EinCymru conversation on Twitter and Facebook

Out-takes

- 85 pieces of positive media coverage secured for new resource, with 31M reach

Outcomes

- 96% of pupils who returned the evaluation forms in first three months agreed that they were 'more likely to recognise negative stereotyping in the media', while 78% agreed that they were 'more likely to challenge negative stereotyping.'

Quotes from Pupils':

'They get singled out and we should stop it'

'They have helped me understand that this happens everywhere'

'I know that they are just like me'

'I know what to look for and will try to find more reliable news'

Budget and cost effectiveness:

The work was delivered by our in-house team, including a Digital Communications Officer and a Participation Officer, incorporated into their day-to-day core work.

The work was delivered in-house with a total spend of £977.