

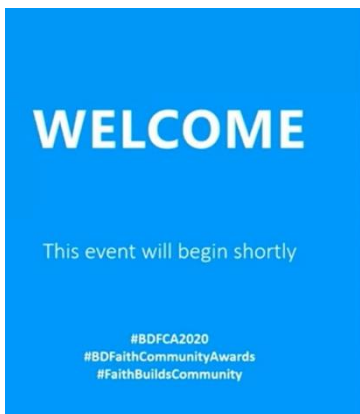
## The Lord-Lieutenant's Council on Faith September Newsletter

The mission of the Lieutenancy and its Council on Faith is to build bridges; connecting individuals, organisations and social networks. This will enhance Londoners' sense of belonging and thus increase social inclusion within the capital. This newsletter records the activities of the Council on Faith members and the Lord-Lieutenant of Greater London, Sir Ken Olisa.

### Celebrating Local Faith and Community Work

On Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> August, local community heroes were celebrated at Barking & Dagenham Faith Forum's inaugural Faith & Community Awards. The local champions hailed from a range of different faiths, cultures and beliefs, and have used these to inspire positive change and progress in Barking and Dagenham. 19 projects and community groups were recognized across various categories. The event was hosted online and was enjoyed by 100 participants. Organisations and projects that were featured ranged from foodbanks to local mosques, gurdwaras and churches, to dance crews and arts and crafts groups.

The local awards were made possible due to the support of the Council on Faith who is encouraging boroughs across London to hold their own awards event celebrating the successes of faith-based social action in their local area. It is hoped that this event, and similar schemes such as the Bexley Faith in Community Awards, will inspire others.



Himanshu Jain, the Chair of Barking & Dagenham Faith Forum, said: “At such volatile and uncertain times, we believe it is more important than ever to shine a spotlight on, and celebrate, those who work to bring our community together. All of the groups and projects featured provide vital services that often do not receive the praise and recognition they deserve. These last few months have made their work more of a struggle, but all these groups, and many new ones, have stepped up to serve their local community and combat the new challenges together – and for this, they deserve to be celebrated”.

Ian Pittaway DL, Representative Deputy Lieutenant for the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, shared: “The Barking & Dagenham Faith Awards were a wonderful way of seeing the wide variety of groups working tirelessly within the borough to improve the lot of its residents in so many ways. It gave an opportunity to show all of the participants how valued their contribution is, even though none of them sought that recognition in carrying out their activities. It was a truly uplifting evening which I hope other boroughs will have the opportunity to replicate themselves.”

To find out more, please visit Barking & Dagenham Faith Forum's [website](#), [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

To watch the event, please [follow this link](#).

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## Interview with Dr Muhammad Abdul Bari MBE, DL



Dr Muhammad Abdul Bari MBE, DL is a noted civic leader, author and commentator who has been serving Britain's diverse communities for three decades.

He was a member of Government's Inner Cities Religious Council, Secretary General of the Muslim Council of Britain, Chairman of East London and Board member of the London 2012 Organising Committee. He is a Fellow of the RSA, Honorary Fellow of QMUL and Honorary Doctor of Education at UEL.

He is an Executive Committee member of Citizens UK. He provides strategic support to a number of large charities. As an educationalist and parenting consultant, he mentors young professionals on civic participation.

*Muhammad Abdul Bari, you have had a fascinating career. Please tell me a bit more about your professional background.*

After completing my RAF training and serving in the Bangladesh Air Force for a few years I decided to go into the field of academia. I trained as a Physicist and after completing my PhD from King's College London in 1986, I worked as a Post-Doc researcher at the Royal Holloway University of London until 1990. I then became a secondary school science teacher at a school in Haringey after completing my PGCE in Secondary Science. I worked as a Specialist Teacher focusing on behavioural support in Tower Hamlets until I took early retirement in 2011.

Since the 1980s I also was involved in a number of large voluntary and charity organisations such as Citizens UK and Muslim Aid. From 2006 to 2013 I was a non-Executive Director of the London 2012 Olympic/Paralympic Organising Committee (LOCOG). In recent years, along with helping various voluntary organisations directly or indirectly, I have been busy reading, writing and working with parents and young people on helping to raise the future generation as better human beings and citizens.

*You are a noted civic leader, especially for service to the diverse communities of East London. You are the chairman of the board of trustees of the East London Mosque and a founding member of The East London Communities Organisation (TELCO). Please tell us more about your work with these organisations.*

The ethos of serving people is embedded in our family. As it is also highly valued in Muslim tradition, I got involved with youth & community work and civil society activism during my university years. At East London Mosque, we support the religious, educational and spiritual needs of the local community and beyond. TELCO, which later became Citizens UK, is a national grassroots civic body that trains people from all communities on civic activism. I was also one of the founding members of the Muslim Council of Britain which serves the Muslim community as its largest and most diverse umbrella group; I was its Secretary General from 2006 to 2010. As a former trustee of the international charity Muslim Aid for a long time, I used to help oversee the work done to support the dispossessed around the world.

In recent years I stepped down from senior positions of the organisations mentioned above to allow the next generation of leaders to take more prominence, but I still keep close touch with, and take keen interest in, their work. Simultaneously, due to the need for better education and parenting in our diverse, particularly disadvantaged, communities, I have been running parenting classes since the late 1990s; I devised a course named "Building Families Building People".

*Through your experience as a Deputy Lieutenant, what would you say the importance of community work is?*

Community work to me is voluntary grassroots civic work that builds or strengthens the fabric of our society. In Muslim faith traditions 'leaders are those who are servants of their people'. There are better organised as well as less organised or harder-to-reach communities in our midst, in London and elsewhere. As a Deputy Lieutenant it is our job to reach out to the communities who make London great, as the microcosm of the whole world, and find ways to support them in all their endeavours.

*What are your aspirations for the Council on Faith?*

London is a mega city of numerous faiths and beliefs which help bring a sense of identity and belonging to millions of Londoners. The Council on Faith has been bringing organisations and individuals together to build bridges amongst faith communities. We should build on this and keep on reaching out to disadvantaged communities. The recent visit to East London Mosque by the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge was a huge morale boost to East London's Muslim communities, some of whom live in very difficult circumstances. The Council on Faith is in a unique position to find more organisations that are being led by volunteers who are doing extraordinary jobs with unfailing dedication. More and more of these 'otherwise unknown' organisations need recognition in order to bring confidence to London's faith communities.

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## **Updates from Council on Faith members**

On 7 September, the Council on Faith met virtually for their quarterly meeting. Tom Jackson, Curate at Holy Trinity Brompton, was invited to share the work of his church and others faith groups they have partnered with over the last six months to respond to the impact of the pandemic. This work involved co-ordinating food donations, supporting families on the Delgarno estate, and sharing their practices with other Churches who want to set up similar networks. In total, they have delivered 495,000 meals in London since lockdown and 2.4 million nationally

We are aware that the pandemic and subsequent restrictions has impacted the physical interactions Deputy Lieutenants can have in their local areas but engagement has not ceased. We asked members of the Council of Faith to share what they have been up to.

Lockdown started with greatly increased email and telephone traffic – initiating contacts with parts of the community where only tenuous links existed – the undertakers, cemetery and crematorium workers, local council refuse and recycling managers for example.

Then it became apparent that food banks and shelters needed support, and occasional visits followed. Faith groups were contacted, and letters of support and encouragement were sent out. Many Zoom meetings followed, including attendance at several Zoom church services, for example to bid farewell to a departing Methodist Superintendent, and I was among the thirty later to welcome his successor.

Beyond encouraging nominations for Covid recognition, and seeking charitable support for a number of activities, I recall hosting a couple of Lieutenancy gatherings on Zoom to keep the Representatives in North London in touch with each other.

**Martin Russell DL, Representative Deputy Lieutenant for Barnet**

On 8 July, I participated in the setting up of the RBKC BAME Advisory Group. On 27 July, I attended two meetings of the Board of Trustees to ensure safe reopening of the Muslim Cultural Heritage Centre, the Almanaar Mosque & the Chelsea Muslim Community Centre. The Centres were fully engaged, through their volunteers, in looking after the safe wellbeing of vulnerable residents, distributing food and hygienic items to the needy. On 2 September, I attended the Kensington & Chelsea Faith Communities Partnership meeting.

**Dr Mustafa Abu-Lisan DL**

Since March, I have been involved in a national project which looks at coping with grief during the Covid pandemic from a Muslim, Jewish and Christian perspective. A video is being produced which includes perspective from individuals who lost family members and religious leaders.

Secondly, I attended a Zoom meeting involving 90 women in Waltham Forest sharing experiences about supporting the community and their families during the lockdown. Waltham Forest Women's Network are aiming to produce a permanent record of the experiences.

Thirdly, I helped to keep four schools, for which I am CEO, open during the lockdown. Working with Principals to help needy families, and overseeing the issuing of Free school meal vouchers, IT equipment and resources for home-schooling for 2000 students.

**Bushra Nasir DL**

On March 6th I was honoured deputise for the Lord-Lieutenant by greeting HRH the Duchess of Cornwall when she attended the WOW (Women of the World) celebration at the Royal Festival Hall.

In my role as Senior Vice President of the Board of Deputies of British Jews I have spoken via Zoom about my work to several Jewish communities around the UK and addressed meetings of the Association of Jewish Refugees (AJR).

I have also attended executive meetings of the National Association of Standing Advisory Committees for Religious Education (NASACRE) which provides information and support for teachers of RE throughout England and Wales. As a Development Officer, I am part of a working group to ensure that religion and world-views are given priority in the school curriculum.

**Sheila Gewolb DL**

This year I joined the judging panel for the Faith Awards and was overwhelmed by the kindness and generosity of people. If we've learnt anything over recent months, it is how important community is and the Faith Awards are the perfect way to highlight this. Delighted to be a part of it.

On 27 August, Rosi Prescott DL Lambeth and I joined local Councillor David Amos and the CEO at Vauxhall City Farm for the opening of the Alpaca Shed. The Farm is a haven for local people, many living in high rise apartments with no gardens. The Farm also supports people with mental and physical challenges. Another example of people working together for the good of their community.

**Colleen Harris DL**



## Events of interest attended by the Royal Family

On 24 April, Members of the Council on Faith and Sir Kenneth Olisa attended a virtual Iftar hosted by the organisation Naz Legacy. The Iftar was held in aid of the Princes Trust. HRH The Prince of Wales, the guest of honour and keynote speaker, expressed his thanks to the Muslim community whose charitable communitywide work in the face of Covid-19 is remarkable.



On 16 September, The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, visited East London Mosque and the Maryam Centre (a 2017 Faith & Belief Community Award Winner). They learned how volunteers have supported members of their community during the pandemic by delivering warm meals and medication, and have provided befriending calls to the isolated, vulnerable and elderly.

