

Press Release

Groundbreaking research into Young Muslim Women in contact with the Criminal Justice System

29th February 2024

A groundbreaking study into the experiences of young Muslim girls aged 17-25 years entering the criminal justice system (CJS) is being undertaken by the Muslim Women in Prison Project (MWIP) based in Bradford in collaboration with Leeds Beckett University. Funded by the Barrow Cadbury Trust and Transition 2 Adulthood (T2A), the study is the first of its kind with a specific focus on the intersection of gender, age, and faith.

MWIP Project Director Dr Sofia Buncy commented: *'The research aims to foster a comprehensive understanding of the unique challenges faced by young Muslim women in contact with the CJS and the role that early intervention can play in diverting this demographic of young Muslim women away from criminalisation. This is a pioneering joint community and academic effort to identify, understand and address the factors contributing to the disproportionate representation of young Muslim girls in the criminal justice system. The pathway to change will be shaped by the voices of young Muslim women and will always prioritise inclusivity, cultural and faith sensitivity'.*

Dr Alexandria Bradley from Leeds Beckett University and Dr Sarah Goodwin who are partners on this research remarked: *'The prison and resettlement experiences of Muslim women have not yet been captured within academic and theoretical discussions. The transference and influence of shame is so prevalent in the narratives of the young Muslim women we speak to, and the impact of this in relation to their desistance journeys is under researched. HMPPS and MOJ policy often overlooks cultural diversity and how this impacts justice work involving Muslim women. This results in a lack of prioritised funding and tailored support provision for women from minoritised groups'.*

Laurie Hunte, T2A Programme Manager, adds: *'The Young Women's Justice Project 2022 report found that Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority young women face both gender and racial inequality while in the justice system. Young Muslim women discussed how they struggled to connect with professionals because they lack the understanding and curiosity to meet their specific needs. As a result, young Muslim women often receive little to no support, or if they do, it's not tailored to their experiences. This only compounds the likelihood of further involvement with the justice system. We're incredibly proud to support this vital research project that can help us better understand the challenges and create a blueprint for age-appropriate, gender responsive and culturally competent services'.*

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