



*Raising Awareness by Engaging the Community*

# Action Pack

Every organisation or person who takes part in IAW will have their name and the details of their activity posted on the IAW website. This information together with contact details will also be included in the press pack that will be handed out at the launch / press conference. Please forward via e-mail the details of your IAW activity; date & time; venue; name of your organisation and contact details to:

**| Email: [admin@iaw.org.uk](mailto:admin@iaw.org.uk) | Website: [www.iaw.org.uk](http://www.iaw.org.uk) |**

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# We need your help!

Have you heard of Islam Awareness Week (IAW)?

- It's a national event launched in 1994 to provide information about Islam, its message and way of life. Through awareness we help dispel misconceptions, build community relations and combat Islamophobia.
- Celebrating its 12<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year, it's a great opportunity to develop contacts with individuals and institutions within your local community and promote social interaction. Communities and Organisations throughout the country organise a range of activities and events during the week.

When is it happening?

- This year's events will run from 21st to 27th November 2005.
- The theme for this year is "Past and Present: 1,000 years of Islam in Britain".

What kind of things do people organise?

- Lectures, seminars, cultural programmes and diversity awareness sessions.
- Stalls and exhibitions in libraries, markets and shopping centres.
- Social events, variety shows and kid's fun days.
- Guided tours in mosques and targeted leaflet distribution.
- Basically anything and everything that gets the community to interact with each other.

Who gets involved?

- People like you and me!
- Local authorities and LEAs.
- Schools, colleges and universities.
- Local libraries & volunteer groups.
- Mosques & Islamic organisations.

What can I do?

Lots - We need you to organise these types of events in London. You can do this by getting people and organisations involved like your friends, neighbours, tenants associations, local community groups, Islamic Organisations & mosques, interfaith groups, local schools, Local Council, LEAs & businesses.

Next steps?

- This Action Pack is packed full of information of the types of activities you can organise in your locality. Talk to your family, friends, colleagues and organisational management and start planning your activities now!
- Alternatively visit the Islam Awareness Week website at [iaw.org.uk](http://iaw.org.uk) for further information and inspiration.

## Getting Started

Decide what you aim to achieve and then think about the sort of events that would be most suitable and effective. Be creative. Consult with others who would like to get involved e.g. your friends, co-workers, brothers and sisters etc. Estimate the resources that you will need and develop a timetable for implementation and action.

Your aim should be to reach out to as many people as possible during the week. Approach the week like a public contact campaign.

Target mosques as well as local Islamic Organisations – ask them to have an open day to invite the public in and tell them about their work. Get them involved by encouraging them to organise events of their own.

Contact local and national Islamic charities – ask them to provide information on their work. Think about working in partnership with the charities to raise funds via sponsored walks, auctions or food fairs.

Look at non-Muslim community involvement, e.g. local community associations, environmental groups, scouts and guides, multi-faith groups and volunteer organisations. Try and hold joint activities and events such as interfaith talks or even lunch gatherings where you can share common interests and discuss community issues.

Also think about getting public bodies involved e.g. your local council, Mayor, LEA or Community Liaison Officer. Depending on your contacts and connections maybe you can get these bodies to run their own awareness programmes during the week for their staff and employees.

Ask local communities from different national backgrounds to prepare food and/or their own cultural exhibition in a corner of your own exhibition or elsewhere. Allocate a different region of the world every day or alternatively organise food fairs.

At the local level you should make every effort to publicise your activities through the local media. The following are further ideas for publicity that could be used:

- Regional and local radio.
- Newspapers.
- Local TV stations or cable channels.
- Local borough newsletters and community news forums.
- Posters (libraries, schools, colleges, clubs, taxis, council departments, sport centres, etc.).
- Leaflets distribution in markets and shopping centres.
- Use of street banners and billboards.

Whatever you choose to do make sure that you publicise it adequately and in good time to ensure that you attract your desired audience. Don't forget to let the IAW team know of your activities and events.

The following pages contain a list of activities that you can organise and get people involved in. Start planning now to ensure a successful Islam Awareness Week!

## Planning your activities

In order to ensure your event or activity is successful and goes without a hitch you need to start planning and planning early. Grab a notebook and start jotting down ideas and things to do as they come to you. When you start writing things down you will be able to see what is required and what you need to do to achieve your objective.

Ask yourself the following questions:

What is it I'm trying to achieve and who is it directed at? Think about your idea and your target audience. What is their age group, background and expectations? What message do you want to get across?

What activity do I need to organise? Will a leaflet do, or do I need to organise a lecture or social event? Think about how you can reach your audience. Leaflets can be very effective depending on the message. An advert in your local paper would reach a large number of people. A social gathering could be targeted at a specific group like teachers or local councillors or even your neighbours, both Muslim and non-Muslim. It all depends on what you are trying to achieve.

Where and when can I hold such an event? This will depend on your target audience and when they will be available. If it involves a school then it can be during the day, if it's a day conference or lecture it may be best to hold it during the weekend and so on. Think about what facilities are available in your local area such as libraries, shopping centres, community halls, local mosque or Council offices that you can hire or use free of charge.

Once you have resolved these questions you will know the following:

- The message you want to get across and the target audience.
- The activity or event you are going to organise.
- Where and when you are going to hold it.

Now comes the exciting bit, how you are going to achieve it. Depending on your activity or event you need to get others involved. Talk to your friends and family about your ideas. Be enthusiastic and explain the rationale behind your ideas. Encourage them to get involved. Depending on how persuasive you are you should be able to get a few like-minded people on board. Next steps:

- Form a team and share your contact details with each other.
- Breakdown your activity/event into smaller elements i.e. facilities & resources, speakers & contacts, advertising & publicity etc. This will form your individual working groups or activity sub-headings.
- Discuss how these things can be done and together come up with a list of things to do.
- Decide when these tasks need to be done then list each in the order they need to be done.
- Decide who will do each task and agree a date for completion. Think about your skills, experience and strengths when deciding who does what. Keep minutes of your meetings and tasks so you all know what each other is doing.
- Arrange to meet on a regular basis e.g. once a week to see how each of you is getting on. Offer advice and encouragement to each other. If need be step in and help where required if someone is struggling.
- If tasks are not getting completed don't panic. Breakdown the task into even smaller pieces and share out the workload.
- Keep a list of things that went well as well as things that went wrong or could have been done better. This will form your 'Lessons Learnt' list, which you can use next time around to make sure you don't make the same mistakes again.
- View this as a positive experience where you are learning new things and making new friendships.
- Last but not least make sure you are having fun!

## Guided Tours

Tours should be organised, particularly for non-Muslims (e.g. friends, teachers, police, neighbours and social workers) to Muslim areas of interest. These should include visits to Mosques, (especially to observe the Jumaa prayer), Islamic schools, shops, etc.

You should contact your local schools and arrange to take groups of students to visit mosques. The following is a checklist to satisfy before such a visit:

- Try to choose a purpose-built Mosque to visit rather than a converted house. These are usually more impressive for non-Muslim visitors and provide better facilities.
- Make sure you contact the Mosque in advance and ask permission for the visit. Ask if there is any available literature that you could handout during your guided tour.
- Avoid prayer times where possible especially with large groups of students/visitors.
- Ensure you have both a male and female guide available to escort mixed groups of students to both areas.
- If female students are to form part of the group ensure that the Mosque permits females to enter.
- Try to learn a bit of history about the Mosque that you are visiting.
- If possible provide students with a handout before arrival. This could detail dress code requirements (such as a scarf for females and no shorts or short skirts) and also a sketch of the layout of the Mosque with 'quiet' areas clearly marked. Most non-Muslims live in fear of inadvertently offending by ignorance of requirements!
- Ablution and prayer should also be explained as far as possible (without becoming too detailed).
- Try to follow-up the visit with a letter thanking the students for attending, and offer the services for future guided tours.

Whatever you choose you should ensure that your guided tour is well planned and you have prepared adequately to provide your guests with an enjoyable and memorable experience.

## Targeted Leaflet Distribution

Leaflets are available from organisations like the Islamic Society of Britain (ISB), which you can distribute house-to-house, mail-shot to friends, colleagues, neighbours, etc. or even to distribute in town centres. You can obtain leaflets on various topics from a number of Islamic organisations free of charge.

It should be noted that there are 2 million Muslims in the UK. If one tenth of that number each handed out 100 leaflets during the week to their friends and contacts, 20 million people could be reached!

If you are feeling really creative or know someone who is you could design and print your own leaflets and posters. Maybe you can highlight a particular local issue/cause or pick a topic that you are really interested in.

Some ideas for topics are as follows:

- What is the Muslim view on the purpose of life?
- How do Muslims manage the stress of everyday life?
- Coping with a crisis – the Muslim way.
- Learning to let go – the Muslim perspective on death and afterlife.

Be sensitive in your approach to each topic. Remember to be respectful of others beliefs and do not be confrontational. The aim is to educate people about your beliefs and not to win points. Remember that showing respect earns respect and costs nothing.

## Lectures, Seminars and Cultural Programmes

Presentations, lectures and courses on topic of interest could be organised. Alternatively local groups could even organise a day-long programme comprising of a presentation followed by a discussion, slide shows and Islamic cultural shows including Islamic rhymes and songs (nasheeds). Presentations could be held on the following topics:

- Towards a caring society.
- Islam and science in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- Back to basics.
- Islam and social change.
- Faith versus Materialism.
- Islam and human rights.
- Economics and Islam.

Local institutions (e.g. hospitals, police, council) and large companies could be contacted for permission to run in-house seminars or diversity training on Islam for their employees. These seminars could be from one hour to even a whole day programme. When contacting the companies, it should be made clear that the sole aim of these seminars is to create understanding and better community relations.

Ask a Muslim professional to run a 'surgery' for non-Muslim professionals in the same field, e.g. teachers, doctors, lawyers, social workers, police. This offers an opportunity to discuss issues that they come up against in their line of work relating to Muslims, their faith and culture.

What ever you decide to do remember the following key essentials:

- Themes & catchy titles.
- Good speakers & a suitable venue.
- Timekeeping & refreshments.
- Publicity and personal invites.

## Invitation to Dinner and Variety Show

This could be quite effective in enabling the non-Muslim friend or neighbour to see the Muslim life and culture. Our beloved Prophet also used this method for promoting better understanding. The dinner should be organised for targeted groups of people. Ensure that the venue and programme are suitable for the audience. For example, if you are organising a dinner for the town Mayor, Councillors, MPs, lecturers, doctors, etc. than your venue and programme would be different than if you were inviting the Muslim youth or Muslim community leaders.

Provide a variety show including Qur'an recitation, nasheeds, plays and competitions. Encourage local Muslim children to take part. Approach local halal restaurants whose catering services may come free depending on your powers of negotiation.

## Video shows

A suitable venue with proper and comfortable seating arrangements should be booked/hired and you are advised to use a video projector rather than a large TV. Video projectors can be hired from local electrical accessories stores. Video shows are very effective in conjunction with an exhibition. The content of the video should be suitable for the audience.

Approach local community volunteer groups or multi-faith organisations and see if you can put on a joint event or use their halls free of charge for your event. Your local estate may have a community hall you can use.

Alternatively think about how you can get your local schools involved. For instance, during assemblies or lessons, videos can be shown on various topics relating to Islam. As an example for pre-teens in nursery or infants schools you could show tapes from the 'Adam's World' series available from Islamic Vision and no doubt available from your local Islamic bookshops.

There are a whole host of videos and DVDs available from various organisations and shops on different aspects of Islam that you can use for your events and activities.

## Stalls

Stalls and displays are a very cost-effective way to reach the people. Stalls could be set up in places such as the railway station, town centres, market places and shopping centres. If you plan to set up in public places, check with your local council whether permission is required.

The stall could hold items such as leaflets, booklets, stickers, poster displays, artefacts, information sheets on Islam, etc. Passers-by could be invited to complete questionnaires on their knowledge of Islam. Balloons or badges could be given to the children. If you do not have many things don't worry - even a couple of good items can create a lot of interest.

Make sure you use your stall to advertise your other activities.

## Exhibitions

An exhibition kit should include very well designed and produced displays on basic Islamic beliefs and teachings, the Qur'an, economics and family life. Use material and artefacts such as prayer mats, photographs, Muslim world map, painting, and calligraphy and so on to make up a good exhibition. Exhibitions could also include audio-visuals, computer games, graphics, charts and graphs and even free henna painting to enliven the presentation.

A large colourful exhibition is a great focal point for your IAW activities. The venue is all-important. Look for a central, high profile location. Look at the cost and accessibility. Book the location well in advance.

Approach your local council, Councillor or Diversity Officer and see if they would be prepared to fund and display an exhibition in the town hall or council offices. Approach your local shopping centre or supermarket to see if you can have an exhibition there (just imagine the number of people who go through these places!). Ask your local library to put up a small display on Islam, collect all the books on Islam on one table and so on.

## Use Your Exhibition:

- Don't just set up your exhibition and sit back. Invite the people!
- Send out invites to all local schools with a booking form for a two-hour visit (3 busloads of school kids turning up at once could be disastrous).
- Target 14-16 year olds. Offer sessions on a theme from their GCSE syllabus (this information can be obtained from teachers in advance).

Send invites to social workers, health care professionals, benefit agencies, teachers, trainee teachers, police, prison officers, probation officers, etc. Hold a small session to address their particular concerns, again structure your visit, e.g.

- 20 minutes presentation by speaker.
- 20 minutes question time.
- 40 minutes refreshments and time to wander around exhibition and talk to volunteers.

Evening sessions would work well e.g. 6.00 – 9.00 p.m.

Have a half day for mothers and toddlers and provide a crèche - a fun, well-resourced crèche with lots and lots of volunteers for both Muslim & non-Muslim mums. A bouncy castle would be a good idea.

## Ideas for your exhibition:

'Discover Islam' poster sets are ideal in providing a basic structure. Every area should have a set. This can be enhanced and expanded and the different themes within the series can be used as the starting point for further displays.

For example, if you take the subject of women in Islam you could look at the historical perspective or women mentioned in the Qur'an. You can also look at what the Qur'an says about women regarding equality and rights. Maybe you can explore the achievements of Muslim women in the UK like doctors, lawyers and teachers or explore what the Qur'an says about dress code and modesty for women as well as men.

Don't forget to include artefacts and paraphernalia that point to the belief, e.g. prayer mats, beads, calligraphy, etc.

Last but not least have tour guides available at your exhibition. Take your visitors around or offer a drink and questions may follow. It's an opportunity to really interact with people.

Here are some other ideas for exhibitions:

## Art & Architecture:

- Famous mosques - Sinan & Istanbul.
- Use of Calligraphy.
- Geometric design.
- Islamic paintings and artefacts in museums.
- Splendour of Egypt's thousands of minarets.
- Islamic architectural influence in building design.

#### Travel:

- Ibn Batuta is a great topic - his travels took him around the world covering all the Muslim lands and beyond.
- Different cultures - same beliefs.
- Muslim Countries around the world – a good way to dispel the myth that Islam is a religion for Arabs.

#### Child friendly:

- K.G.1 & K.G.2 packs.
- Colouring sheets and other learning activities for tots.
- Badges, for example 'write your name in Arabic'. These can be hugely popular.

#### Trails and Quizzes:

When you've put up your exhibition, go around it and pick out a trail for kids to follow. Put simple questions on bright colourful cards and stick them in key locations where the children will find them easily and number them. Produce a simple A4 card with all the questions and space to fill in the answers as well as their name and address. Photocopy onto colour paper and hand out free to all kids who come to the exhibition. Offer a prize for the winners in different age groups. Don't forget to make the final question differential, for example eleven simple answers e.g. how many times a day does a Muslim pray, what is the name of the third prayer and so on then the last question being 'what did you learn about Islam today?'

Have you any bright, enthusiastic teachers in your area? This is an ideal task for them to 'volunteer' for. 'Hands on' table for kids - prayer mats, scarves, clothes from Muslim countries, beads.

#### Teacher Friendly:

Have volunteers on hand ready to help and advise teachers. Have a corner set aside with teaching resources. Discuss future help and advice you could offer with school visits to mosques, accessing reference material, speakers to go into schools, help with assemblies, support with GCSE religious studies, etc.

#### School Visits:

- Structured time slots.
- Tour of exhibition.
- Carpet in the corner.
- All children follow trail.
- Question time / quizzes - small prizes for winners.
- Free refreshment - juice & biscuits go down a treat!

#### Others:

- Video corner or book/CD stalls.
- Refreshments.
- Audiotape with headphones - the call to prayer or Qur'anic recitation.
- Computer display.
- Children's frieze (local Muslim children).

## Ideas for Fun Events

Oprah Winfrey show - Islamic style obviously!

- Select a theme and audience.
- Suitable panel - need to be able to take the heat!
- Roving presenter with hand-held microphone inviting questions/comments from audience.

Can't Cook, Won't Cook

- Provide international buffet through voluntary community effort.
- Invite visitors up 'on stage' to cook some simple speciality from a Muslim country.
- Make it fun - use clichés e.g. 'here's something I prepared earlier'.
- Demonstrate how to roll out a chapatti or fill a samosa. Give marks out of 10.

Debates

- Euthanasia/abortion.
- Youth & the drugs culture.
- Giving up smoking.
- Neighbours and their rights.

Workshops

- Bringing up children - nurturing in Islam.
- Ecology, Geology.
- Islam & Science.
- Islamic History.
- Law and order in Islam.

Fun

- Calligraphy.
- Islamic Fashion Design.
- Arabic – a beginner's course.
- Islamic Fashion & Beauty - using, for example, henna and kohl.
- Exploring Islamic Design Concepts.
- Culinary.
- Fashion show - women only of course!

Encourage shops to get involved by:

- Dropping a leaflet in every shopping bag!
- Advertise the range of events taking place on their notice boards or windows.
- Demonstration of how to prepare certain foods.



## Media Activities

The Media is a very effective way to get a message across. Your activities could be anything from a letter to the editor (target a number of local newspapers) to writing an article about your activities, interviews on the radio, phone-in sessions, to an interview on your local TV.

You should issue a press release about the activities in your locality. You can also submit to your local paper a special article explaining what Islam Awareness Week is all about. Highlight the misunderstandings about Islam and put across the right perspectives. You should prepare your material and contact the local newspapers well in advance, at least 3 weeks before the event.

Similarly contact your local radio, and request an invitation to participate in a discussion programme during which you are prepared to address whatever aspects of Islam arise through phone-in or general interest. These will almost certainly include issues relating to women, Islamophobia, capital punishment, human rights and other current topics.

Target relevant programmes, e.g. religious/women's programmes, - and ask them to cover the week's events. If they have a 'what's on' slot, let them know! Ask them to produce their own programme about Islam in the region.

Some of the most common misunderstandings about Islam are listed below:

- Muslims worship a different God – explain that Allah is in Arabic and translated into English means 'the God'.
- Islam is a religion only for Arabs – give examples of the countries/cultures around the world with followers.
- Muslims worship Muhammad – explain that he is an example of living Islam but we do not worship him.
- Islam is a new religion – explain that Islam is not new and Muhammad was the last prophet, not the first.
- Women are oppressed in Islam – show what the Qur'an says about women's rights and responsibilities.
- Islam was spread by the sword – explain how it was actually spread and continues today in Europe and elsewhere.
- Muslims are all terrorists – show how this is a minority and what the Qur'an says about the sanctity of life.
- Muslims hate Jesus – explain how we revere Jesus as a great prophet of God and where we differ.
- Muhammad wrote the Qur'an – explain why this is impossible and show the evidences in the Qur'an itself.

By talking to people and sharing information with our community we dispel myths and help to generate understanding. Through this we can work together with all members of society to tackle issues that concern the whole community.

## Open Day or Launch Party

If there are a number of activities taking place in your locality, whether you are organising events yourself or other organisations or individuals are why not get together and think about arranging a launch party. Invite the press, local dignitaries, teachers, etc. Have refreshments or lunch/dinner. Here are some examples for your open day or launch party:

- Open event in a local park.
- Balloons, badges, any other freebies as well as activities for children e.g. bouncy castles etc.
- Opening ceremony e.g. cut ribbon, couple of speeches (not too many).
- Provide lunch or a buffet. You could get people to bring their own and share with everyone!
- Invite the Press, local Councillors, volunteer groups and teachers as well as your neighbours.
- Hand out leaflets to passers-by and invite them to your events.

## Fund raising

Inevitably some if not all your activities will require some form of funding. So how should you go about raising the money? There are a number of ways you can tackle this depending on your activity. The rule of thumb is that businesses and others will be happy to pay sponsorship money to have their company logo, name and an advert during your event or in your promotional materials. This depends on what your activity / event is and the kind of exposure it will get from the media, local people and community bodies. For instance:

Leaflets / Posters – this may not cost anything as there is a range of free leaflets available from a number of Islamic Organisations such as the Islamic Society of Britain (ISB), World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY), the Islamic Foundation and Islamic Propagation Centre International (IPCI). If you are feeling creative or know someone who has an art/graphic design background you can design your own leaflets on a home PC. Approach local printing firms and find out the cost of printing batches. You can approach local business and ask if they would be prepared to sponsor the cost of the leaflet design/printing. Offer to have the company logo on every leaflet and maybe a small advert as well.

Exhibition materials – there are a number of very good quality A3 size poster sets available from Islamic organisations such as the 'Discover Islam' series from WAMY and the Islamic Foundation and 'Muslim Heritage' series from ISB. To fund the cost of these you can approach local businesses etc with the offer of having their company name and logo on all the display boards e.g. 'sponsored by XYG Company'.

Conferences / lectures – again the same principles apply. A company will pay sponsorship funds to have a prominent space in your activities e.g. their logo and name on your advertising material, announcements from the podium or stage, slides during the event and adverts in your event booklet etc.

## Sponsorship

In order to persuade a company to part with its money you will need to produce a sponsorship pack. For a conference this would include the following:

- Introduction letter to the company owner, chief executive or marketing manager (depending on the size of the business) detailing the event you are organising, its purpose and the kind of exposure it will likely receive and why it is in the interests of the company to sponsor the event.
- An introduction to you, your organisation and Islam Awareness Week (it's purpose and objectives). This is to ensure the company has sufficient information on you and your organisation. They will need to make sure that you are suitable to be considered for sponsorship.
- A list of your speakers and background information e.g. biographies or career highlights.
- A number of sponsorship options ranging in price e.g. option one may be their logo on all you advertising leaflets (detail the number of leaflets you'll be printing) whilst option two maybe their logo and company name on leaflets, posters and an announcement from the stage that they are sponsors etc.
- Information on whom they should contact for enquiries and when the deadline is for responses.
- A contract that details the obligations undertaken by both parties, the deposit to be made and when the full sponsorship money is to be made and to whom.

You will need to send this sponsorship letter and pack to selected companies. You may already know of businesses that sponsor community events. Make some initial phone calls to see if a company would be interested and to ensure you address your request to the correct person within the company concerned.

Follow up with personal phone calls to the companies and individuals concerned a few days after you've sent the pack. You will need to persuade them that it is in their interests to sponsor your event. Key selling points will be; the exposure your event will receive in the community and local media, the level of awareness that will be achieved for the company, the opportunity to interact with the community and apply corporate citizenship values in a practical manner and finally the resulting business and goodwill that will be generated for the company. Emphasise to them it is a great opportunity and one not to be missed!

Last word on fundraising – within your community there will be local businesses as well as family and friends who you can also approach and ask for donations and sponsorship. The size and cost of your event will dictate which approach you adopt when it comes to raising money.

## Conclusion

And there you have it – a whole host of ideas waiting to be implemented. We are sure you can come up with more creative ideas and can improve on the ones listed here. Visit our website [iaw.org.uk](http://iaw.org.uk) for further information.

Your local IAW team will help and assist you with planning and implementation of your activities and events and provide information and support as required.

Remember Islam Awareness Week is a real opportunity for you to:

- Inform people about Islam and combat misconceptions and prejudice
- Build Bridges in the Community and help maintain community cohesion
- Meet and interact with people from all sections of the community and form lasting friendships
- Gain new experience & exposure and flex/develop your creative muscles
- Learn and use organisation and administrative skills
- Gain experience working as a TEAM (Together Everyone Achieves More)
- Have a sense of personal satisfaction when you successfully deliver your event
- Above all have FUN doing it!

Now it's up to you – are you up to the challenge?