



AN INITIATIVE FOR SCHOOL YEARS 9-11



“ [REAL CONVERSATIONS] ALLOWS US TO FEEL COMFORTABLE TALKING ABOUT HARD TOPICS ”

WHAT IS REAL CONVERSATIONS?

Real Conversations is a project jointly run by Muslims and Jews, aimed at breaking down barriers, unlocking assumptions and tackling the roots of extremism. The project helps schools tackle behaviours that are corrosive to British society, such as posting hate online and spreading conspiracy theories about other groups.

The project brings two facilitators – one Jewish, one Muslim – into your school to work with students on some of the issues that are most divisive between Jews and Muslims. Working in a single-identity group (from either community), we create safe spaces for honest and constructive conversations, enabling students to explore the origins of their own views and to understand why there are strong feelings on both sides.



HOW CAN REAL CONVERSATIONS HELP YOUR SCHOOL?

We help schools and students look at the topics that often seem too difficult to broach, such as Israel-Palestine and the relationship between Muslims and Jews in Britain. **We explore the narratives of all sides in the Middle East**, and see the damage that importing the conflict to Britain can have on relations between communities here.

Schools know the need to tackle these vital areas, but may be daunted by the challenges and risks of broaching issues that provoke such strong emotions. Real Conversations gives students the opportunity to do this in a safe environment, and provides a model for discussing tough questions productively. Our workshops fit well into the curriculum for PSHE, Citizenship and other areas, ensuring that students are exposed to real-life complex situations in a structured setting. Students gain life skills to enable them to have difficult conversations about topics that have meaning for them.



“EACH GROUP ENCOUNTERS TWO PEOPLE WHO
MAY PROFOUNDLY DISAGREE ON AN ISSUE”

HOW ARE THE WORKSHOPS STRUCTURED?

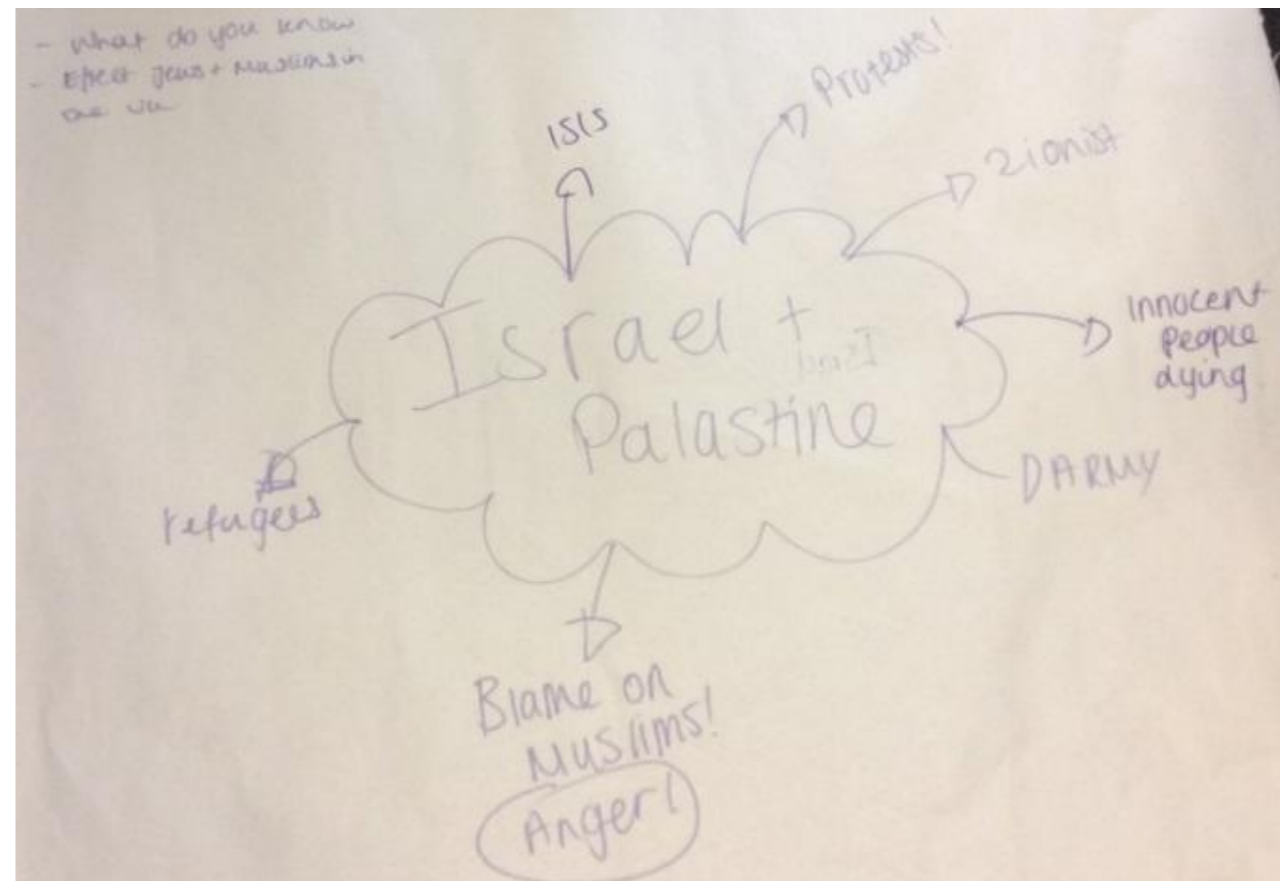
A Real Conversations programme consists of two one-hour workshops, whose length may be adjusted to suit your school's timetable.

The first introduces the key skills needed for difficult conversations, and the second covers difficult issues in depth. Muslim and Jewish facilitators are trained with the skills necessary to engage both Jewish and Muslim faith groups. They work in mixed Jewish-Muslim pairs, leading the workshops in a predominantly Muslim or a predominantly Jewish space.

Real Conversations is not dialogue between faith groups, but each group encounters two people who may profoundly disagree on an issue, and hold very different narratives, but who demonstrate open and honest discussion without hating nor harming each other. Our Facilitators are skilled at leading discussions in potentially volatile environments.



Workshop one teaches the skills required for difficult conversations. It is also an opportunity for pupils to begin exploring their views on Israel-Palestine. Department for Education advice is that ‘children should not be expected to discuss serious contentious issues before they have been trained in the basic techniques with safer topics.’ Workshop one delivers a clear step-by-step framework for holding difficult conversations.



Workshop two looks more deeply at assumptions, and how and why we hold certain views about different groups of people. In this workshop, we refer back to the skills learnt in workshop one and provide further practice, with the focus often directed by the participants.



WHO RUNS REAL CONVERSATIONS?

Real Conversations is a joint endeavor between two community-based Muslim and Jewish organisations:



The Islamic Society of Britain is a community-based charity. Established in 1990, they were one of the first organisations that sought to evolve a uniquely British flavour to Islam. One of their focuses is to promote the positive contribution of Muslims to British society and social justice. <https://www.isb.org.uk/>



Reform Judaism is the national umbrella organization for the UK's 41 Reform synagogues. Reform Judaism is a mainstream progressive branch of Judaism that stresses egalitarianism and social action as core values. <https://www.reformjudaism.org.uk/>



TESTIMONIES

A trial of Real Conversations has already taken place with 17-year-olds at The Zone youth club in Leeds, and with 14/15 year olds at Dixons Kings Academy, Bradford. The quotes distributed around this document are from participants' feedback forms.

"Real Conversations' young facilitators were immediately able to build a rapport with the teenage participants. The project created a safe space for otherwise under-discussed topics, and left participants keener to engage with the difficult issue of Israel-Palestine in an educated and balanced way."

Raina Sheaf, CEO, The Zone

"Real Conversations challenged our students to look at the issue of Palestine-Israel as they haven't done before. The excellent young facilitators took the class through a series of difficult, and thought-provoking activities that allowed pupils to see that Jews and Muslims aren't really so different."

Mr Kahn, Head of Year, Dixons Kings Academy, Bradford



PRACTICALITIES

Schools signing up for Real Conversations programmes to be run between February and May 2018 will not be charged a fee.

To find out if Real Conversations could be right for your school, or to have an informal conversation about the project, please be in touch at the contact point below.

CONTACT

Sue Hoey

schools@real-conversations.org.uk

Please submit the attached sign-up form to Sue Hoey via the e-mail address to the left and we will be in touch.

REAL CONVERSATIONS BOOKING FORM FOR SCHOOLS

Your Name:			
Your Job Title:			
Your Contact details:	E-mail:	Phone:	
Institution name and address:			
Participant/Group details: <i>(anticipated)</i>	Total number of participants:		
	Age range or school year:		
	Identity of participants: <i>(e.g. Muslim group; Jewish group; predominantly Muslim group, etc.)</i>		
Dates and times requested for sessions: <i>(two one-hour workshops)</i>	Dates:	Times:	

REAL
CONVERSATIONS