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Surrey Police shows support for Muslim colleagues and communities during Ramadhan and wishes a blessed Eid Mubarak

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Last week, 78 volunteers from Surrey Police and Sussex Police joined Muslim colleagues and communities to show their support and learn more about Islam and observe Ramadhan, as part of a 'Fasting Collective' organised by the Force's Inclusion team.

Ramadhan lasts for 30 days, coming to a close around this Sunday, 1 May with the celebratory day of Eid ul-Fitr on Monday, 2 May. During Ramadhan, Muslims abstain from food and drink, including water, during daylight hours, as a means of strengthening and reflecting on their faith.

The Fasting Collective's day began shortly after 4 am with a short virtual group meeting and an inspirational welcome from Imam Mansoor Clarke.

At the end of the experience, at the invitation of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community, 30 police officers and staff attended Mubarak Mosque in Farnham for Iftar, the breaking of the fast, a tour of the Mosque and an evening meal.

For those who didn't attend in person, food parcels were supplied by the Ahmadiyya Muslim Youth Organisation for participants to enjoy after sunset.

This is the second year Inspector Chris Pike has fasted for the whole of Ramadhan to understand and support some Muslim friends.

Chris says: *"I was intrigued by how it feels to fast and what my colleagues and friends experience when they fast. Fasting for Ramadhan last year made me appreciate the things in my life that I take for granted, not just people, but also things like having a roof over my head and the community I live in. I feel that I have been fortunate to learn through my experience of fasting. Ramadhan also helps me consider my lifestyle and re-centre, giving me an opportunity to be healthier. Also, zakat, the making of donations to charity, is something which is central to the Muslim faith and has highlighted to me how we can make a difference in other people's lives; not just giving money, but giving people our time too, to give support and compassion to the people around us."*

Hibat ul Mohsin Abid, Director of Outreach for the Ahmadiyya Muslim Youth Association said:

"This is the second year that Ahmadiyya Muslim Youth Association (AMYA) UK has supported Surrey Police's Fasting Collective. AMYA is an organisation with a passion to serve the community and being a driver for positive change at its heart. To support this initiative, we were graciously permitted by His Holiness, Mirza Masroor Ahmad, the current head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Association, to hold the Iftar (breaking of fast) at the Mubarak Mosque. The Fasting Collective has been a great source of inspiration for our youth as well, as not only does it provide us with an opportunity to engage with the police, but also we are truly amazed by the positive experiences and warmth shared by the police. The positive feedback that we have received from those who took part in this initiative has been very encouraging and motivating. For this day, everything was done by volunteers, which included activities such as cooking and packing food, delivering food parcels to several police stations and hosting a physical and virtual Iftar. We really hope that the Fasting Collective will have allowed those who took part an opportunity to better understand the importance of Ramadhan and fasting. It has been an absolute pleasure to host Surrey Police and Sussex Police, and we sincerely hope that in the future we are able to continue with such initiatives and more."

Having taken part herself, Surrey Police's Temporary Assistant Chief Constable Ali Barlow reflected on her experience:

"Being one of the 78 officers and staff involved in the Fasting Collective has given me a much better understanding of why there is a fast and what it means to Muslims – a time for reflection, self-restraint and thinking of others less fortunate. On a practical point whilst I was thirsty rather than hungry during the day it really did make me stop, reflect and focus and made me realise just how much time during the working day we spend grazing on food, drinking endless cups of tea or coffee and getting absorbed in the demands of the everyday. Surrey Police has, through our commitments, promised to be kind, friendly, inclusive and supportive of our police families and to respect and reflect the differences in the communities we serve. We have also committed to valuing and learning from the different perspectives and experiences of others and this is exactly what being involved in the Fasting Collective has helped me to do. It has been an absolute privilege to be involved in the Fasting Collective, to show our support for our Muslim colleagues and communities during the Holy month of Ramadhan, and to experience the fast together. I would like to thank the community for welcoming us

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so warmly to the beautiful Mubarak Mosque – which has such a sense of peace – and for their generosity, kindness and support today. On behalf of us all, I wish everyone celebrating a wonderful Eid Mubarak."

Farhan Hayat, Deputy Inclusion Lead and Chair of Surrey Police Association of Culture and Ethnicity (SPACE) said: *"As a race and ethnicity staff network, we have been so touched and humbled by the support seen throughout Surrey Police for Muslim colleagues observing the holy month of Ramadhan.*

"For Muslims across the world, Ramadhan is without a doubt one of the most important and holiest months of the year and having the support of colleagues means so much. By authentically living the experience of others we strengthen both our knowledge and our connection with them, and we're so pleased that almost eighty colleagues chose to do that."

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