

Ejel's Story

Ejel identifies as a gay Muslim (non-practising). He regards himself as culturally Muslim.

I was born in Luton to Bangladeshi parents and I had a working class upbringing in a conservative Muslim town. There was a lot of homophobia. Luton is the headquarters of now proscribed Islamist group Al-Muhajiroun and it's also the birthplace of the EDL (English Defence League). In this polarised environment I didn't fit in anywhere.

I have reconciled my sexuality and faith, but it took a long time. It was a gradual journey of discovery. Ultimately, the realisation I couldn't change who I was and that is was okay.

I'm now out. I came out officially aged 30, but my family were already aware. I just didn't discuss it. With the advent of social media that all changed. Now everyone knows!

Nowadays my experiences are positive and I campaign for equal rights, but growing up it was negative. A lot of homophobia from the Muslim community deterred me from coming out earlier. I personally witnessed the rise of extremism in my town. However, these experiences ultimately made me stronger, and I now endeavour to educate the misinformed.

Hidayah is important because it's advocacy and support are vital to the LGBT+ community. The Muslim LGBT+ community need a strong ally and Hidayah provides that in form of education, advice and networking possibilities.

In closing my journey here, I would say be your authentic self. That's what I did, and I don't regret it. I'm happier for it. I was unhappy for most of my formative years and I wouldn't wish that on anyone. Don't worry, be happy!

