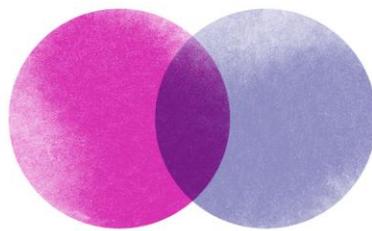


How to set up a Nisa-Nashim group

June 2016



Nisa-Nashim

Jewish Muslim Women's Network





About Nisa-Nashim

Nisa-Nashim aims to bring our communities together and promote ways in which Jewish and Muslim women can understand that their similarities are greater than their differences, through a range of shared initiatives that support their leadership journeys and encourage them to form meaningful personal relationships, while benefiting the wider society in which they live.

We place strong emphasis on the importance of role modelling – as women, as leaders and as partners, and seek to promote the positive work of Nisa-Nashim to the next generation to combat evolving misconceptions.

Our key aims:

- To bring our communities together through women
- To foster leadership skills in women
- To address some of the misconceptions in wider society about Jewish and Muslim women

For more information you can visit our website: www.nisanashim.org

What are Nisa-Nashim Groups?

Nisa-Nashim creates safe, inclusive groups of women to break down misconceptions, to empower each other leaders and, above all else, to make friends. Our Nisa-Nashim groups are based on location and/or special interest and may also deliver social action projects.

A Nisa-Nashim group might be based on a location where you live, work or study, or be based on a special interest - professional or personal.

We currently have Nisa-Nashim groups of teachers and journalists, with further interest in groups for those working in fashion or with people with learning disabilities. We also have groups interested in bringing together mothers and daughters, and with special interests such as food and dining.

Note that not all Nisa-Nashim events are group based and if we have you on our mailing list we will invite you to regional or national events regardless.

Step One: Recruit a Co-Chair

Each Nisa-Nashim group will need a Jewish and a Muslim co-chair. If you already know who you'd like to pair with, skip to 'Step Two', below.

Consider the following:

- Is there already a Nisa-Nashim group operating in the area (location / special interest) you'd like to cover?
- Have you asked Nisa-Nashim to find you a co-chair? We have many contacts
- Who in my network might know someone who could co-chair with me?
- Are there any local interfaith groups who could help?
- Could I use social media to find someone?

Once you've found a partner, let us know and we'll add you to our network of group chairs.

You may wish to set up a small steering group for your Nisa-Nashim group.

Step Two: Name your Network

Our Nisa-Nashim groups are growing organically. This means that there may be some overlap in terms of location or special interest. In order to differentiate your group, you will need to name it

Some ideas include: *Nisa-Nashim Harrow*, *Nisa-Nashim Connections Leeds*, *Nisa-Nashim Law Students' Group*, *Nisa-Nashim Harmony*

It is important that all group co-chairs read and sign our Terms of Agreement before committing to run a Nisa-Nashim group.



Step Three: Recruit your members

The aim of our Nisa-Nashim groups is to create a safe, inclusive space for women to share experiences, to break down misconceptions and to empower each other as leaders.

We suggest that you consider the following:

- A group can consist of any number of women – *where there is greater interest, you may wish to break down into subgroups.*
- A group should have an equal amount of Muslim and Jewish women
- Consider recruiting a diverse group – for example in terms of religious observance
- Be inclusive and welcoming; if your group is full, direct interested women to Nisa-Nashim who can guide them in establishing their own group.
- Contact local synagogues / mosques; speak to a Rabbi or Imam who may know of interested individuals
- Develop your social media presence – if you would like to set up a Facebook or LinkedIn group, Nisa-Nashim can help you
- Consider web searches focused on local interfaith initiatives and on local social action and social service providers
- Consider canvassing at local kosher or halal delis, small businesses, etc.



Step Four: Hold your Launch Meeting

The aim of your launch meeting is to consider the Nisa-Nashim objectives and to get to know each other.

Logistics

- Ideally this should be held at a local, accessible, non-religious venue with good parking and transport links.
- Aim for a space where you can comfortably seat everyone with additional space for refreshments.
- Refreshments should adhere to the dietary requirements. See 'events checklist'.

Format

- The exact format of your launch meeting will vary, specifically whether your group is based around a special interest, and how many women will be present.
- We recommend an element of structured networking to ensure that participants mix and are able to engage in personal, one-to-one conversations. We can provide ice breaker and get to know you activities.
- Consider inviting an external speaker with relevance to your group, or one (or both!) of our Nisa-Nashim co-chairs, Laura Marks and Julie Siddiqi, both are happy to support.
- You might use this launch meeting to consider ways in which your group can support your local community through social action initiatives. This is one aim of Nisa-Nashim and we know it to be an excellent way for women to work together.
- If the group at your launch meeting seems too large, consider splitting it into smaller sub-groups

Nisa-Nashim is able to provide a grant of up to £100 to support you with your launch.



Launch Event Case Study – Nisa-Nashim Harrow

Doreen Samuels, also on behalf of Soraya Janmohamed, Co-Chairs, [Nisa-Nashim Harrow](#)

“As a Jewish woman in Harrow, I've been trying to set up something like Nisa-Nashim for years locally. There are so many very similar Jewish and Muslim women leading parallel lives here, with very little interaction, and I've always wanted to unite them in some way.

When I heard about Nisa-Nashim, I felt that this was an amazing opportunity to pursue this. Nisa-Nashim gave me a vehicle, and the infrastructure to bring together our two communities in a meaningful and safe space.

I met my co-chair, Soraya Janmohamed, at a Batmitzvah and we hit it off instantly. Via Facebook and then over coffee we decided to launch Nisa-Nashim in Harrow and haven't looked back.

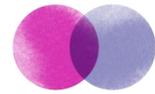
We were very conscious that our group would work only with a balanced number of Jewish and Muslim women, and we aimed for around 30 at our first meeting. This way we could each source an attainable 15 women from our own communities. We aimed for a mix of age, background and interest – this was very much an engineered group initially. We targeted women we knew were open-minded and would be excited by the initiative.

We did encounter those who felt they should have been invited and weren't, but we stressed the importance of balance and diversity to ensure the success of our first meeting and I think people understood. Now Nisa-Nashim Harrow is off the ground, Soraya and I feel more confident in extending the group and we are now welcoming new members to the group.

For the event itself, we sourced a neutral, community venue which was modern, clean and cheap, and had easy parking. We do have future plans to hold events at our local synagogue and mosque, but for our first meeting we wanted there to be no religious connotations so that everyone felt that they could attend on an equal footing.

Our sole intention for the event was for our members to get to know each other – this influenced the format and content of the evening. We included an activity in which everyone asked and answered universal, non-threatening and fun questions about themselves which was a very levelling experience. We did brainstorm various social action initiatives we might get involved in and we had a great response and then focused our efforts on Sadaqa Day, working to pack goods for refugees in a local warehouse, and distributing food to a network of local shelters and hostels.

We all felt that there was such a lovely buzz in the room and everyone left feeling energised and connected. Nisa-Nashim Harrow is evolving all the time; we are thinking about new ways to create meaningful and interesting dialogue and get to know each other further. Watch this space!”



Step Five – Develop your group

Over time, you will have a clearer picture of your members' interests and the best projects, events and ways to interact with each other.

We strongly recommend our [ideas for group projects](#) below which are based on what current groups have found successful and we know they work. We will also have suggested ideas based on Jewish and Muslim festivals and other calendar events on our [website](#) so keep checking back!

- **Themed 'Come Eat With Me' Events**, eg.
 - Outings to local vegetarian restaurants
 - Smaller, home-based evening events designed for members to get to know each other and often with a focus on topics such as wedding or coming of age rituals. Some of these events have also included arts and crafts activities

- **Exercise**, eg.
 - Walks in local parks
 - Attending local exercise sessions together

- **Mirrored visits to local mosques and synagogues**

- **Cultural excursions** with a focus on women's issues

- **Social action initiatives**
 - Interfaith cookery
 - Packathons / donation drop offs
 - Projects related to either Mitzvah Day (November) or Sadaqa Day (March)

While the political situation in the Middle East is of deep concern to both communities, a greater sense of trust and understanding between us is so important before any progress can be made regarding meaningful dialogue on this difficult subject. Experience has shown that this is usually best avoided at an early stage while relationships and friendships are crucially being developed and then carefully nurtured

Nisa-Nashim is able to provide a grant of up to £50 to support your group with its activities (up to a maximum of 4 activities per group)



Step Six - Connecting with Nisa-Nashim

It is essential for the long term growth of Nisa-Nashim that you stay in touch with us. There are several ways to do this:

- Send us details of your members so that we can add them to the Nisa-Nashim circulation list and invite them to events.
- Let us know **before** you're holding an event (and whether it's open or closed) so that we can promote it for you.
- **After** your event, send us your monitoring form, including photos and a paragraph or two (with quotes) so that we can celebrate your successes via social media, our newsletter, and to the press where relevant. The monitoring form also includes details such as the focus of the event, the number of attendees and the exact location – we need this information for our monitoring and funding purposes.
- Use social media to connect with us
 - Facebook: www.facebook.com/nisanashim
 - Twitter: [@nisanashim](https://twitter.com/nisanashim)
 - Instagram: [nisanashim](https://www.instagram.com/nisanashim)

Note you may wish to Close your group or you may wish to keep it Open for new members. Please let us know either way.

