

Assalamu-Alaikum

March 2024

### **Dearest National Executive Members of BCA**

I hope you are well and have had a wonderful start to the year thus far.

As we move forward, I want to highlight that the BCA continues to remain dedicated to supporting not just businesses, but also the individuals within our community, who serve as the backbone of our profession. In line with our commitment to promoting the welfare of our community members, I am delighted to announce our partnership with the NHS' new campaign to raise awareness of its 'Talking Therapies' service for mental health.

A recent poll conducted by NHS England has revealed that over 3 in 5 (64%) South Asians have expressed concerns about their mental health within the past year. This is a significant finding, highlighting the prevalence of mental health challenges within our community.

However, amidst these challenges, there is hope. The same poll indicated that nearly two-thirds (65%) of South Asians who sought professional help for anxiety disorders or depression reported an improvement in their mental health. This underscores the effectiveness of seeking professional support and treatment for mental health concerns.

The BCA is therefore urging anyone struggling with feelings of depression or anxiety, such as excessive worry, panic attacks, social anxiety, post-traumatic stress, or obsessions and compulsions, to seek help through NHS Talking Therapies. They are FREE, effective, and confidential treatments delivered by trained clinicians; online, on the phone or in person.

You can simply refer yourself online at [nhs.uk/talk](https://nhs.uk/talk) or ask your GP for a referral. For those in the community whose first language is not English, Talking Therapies can also be delivered through multilingual therapists or through confidential interpreters in several different languages including: Bengali, Hindi, Punjabi, or Urdu.

As your President, I appreciate working in the hospitality industry might take a toll on your mental health, due to the long hours, the fast pace at which we work, and our constant quest for excellence. I also understand there is still a degree of stigma surrounding discussing mental health issues with family, and amongst our social circles - and a perception that being vulnerable about your struggles is a sign of weakness. It is a great shame that this fear is often held by many men in our community, and we must do more to tackle it.



While it is very important that we encourage a safe, hygienic environment in our businesses, I also strongly believe that we should promote a culture of care, empathy and compassion towards those we feel seem to be struggling with mental health. Together, let us stand united in addressing the mental health challenges facing our community by working hand -in hand with NHS England to raise awareness of its Talking Therapies services.

To demonstrate your support, I request that you display the BCA and NHS Talking Therapies partnership posters which we have included in your membership packs, in your restaurants so that those in need can seek the right support.

With Gratitude

Oli Khan, MBE, FRSA, PHF  
President BCA