

*The inaugural*

# Camden Faith & Belief Awards

*Celebrating Local Unsung Heroes*



Camden

The  
Faith  
& Belief  
Forum



# WELCOME

We are truly honoured to host Camden's first Faith & Belief Community Awards, an opportunity to celebrate the tremendous contributions of our faith communities within the borough. These awards highlight the hugely varied and diverse range of organisations, projects and individuals, who all work tirelessly and selflessly to bring communities together and to tackle a wide range of social issues.

As co-chairs of the Camden Interfaith Network, we are thrilled for this opportunity to highlight the incredible work happening across the borough and celebrate those organisations and individuals who make such a difference in Camden.

Thank you so much for joining us tonight for this celebration. We hope that you make some wonderful and lasting connections with like-minded people from across the borough, and that the good work in Camden is strengthened as a result!

**Cllr Nadia Shah and Cllr Rebecca Filer**  
**Co-chairs of the Camden Interfaith Network**

The Faith & Belief Forum are delighted to partner with Camden Council for the inaugural Camden Faith & Belief Community Awards. Over the last 25 years, the Faith & Belief Forum has been connecting people from all backgrounds, faiths and beliefs and celebrating the power of faith and belief initiatives.

We know that people who are inspired by their faiths & beliefs contribute so much to a local community. These awards are an excellent opportunity to publicly acknowledge and thank these groups and individuals specifically in Camden, and shine a spotlight on their important work.

**Sophie Mitchell**  
**London Communities and Youth Programmes**  
**Coordinator, Faith & Belief Forum**

# PROGRAMME

## Welcome

Cllr Sagal Abdi-Wali

## Reflections on the awards

Benaifer Bhandari

Geraldine Norris DL

## Awards presentation

Awards presented by Cllr Nadia Shah, Cllr Rebecca Filer and the Mayor of Camden, Cllr Samata Khatoon

## Performance

Belsize Square Synagogue quartet

## Awards presentation

## Performance

Tenzin Choenyi and Tenzin Choekyi from the Martsang Kagyu UK Buddhist Centre

## Awards presentation

## Thanks

Cllr Nadia Shah, Cabinet Member for Voluntary Sector, Equalities and Cohesion and co-chair of the Camden Interfaith Network

Phil Champion, Director of the Faith & Belief Forum

## Networking and refreshments

# BUILDING CONNECTED COMMUNITIES AND NEIGHBOURHOODS

Camden's strength is in its diversity. Projects in this category create inclusive spaces and opportunities for people from different faiths and communities to connect. Initiatives may include interfaith relations, bringing residents together around an important local issue or to improve the local area, encouraging and supporting social action, or events that promote learning, understanding and friendship across communities.

## Winner

### **Interfaith Iftars, Faiths Forum for London**

Since October 2023, Faiths Forum for London, a Camden-based charity, have organised a series of interfaith Iftars, both nationally, in London and in the Camden borough. They've had over 500 attendees, partnered with various faith centres and places of worship and for many have been the first or only interfaith event since the recent outbreak of conflict in the Middle East.

[faithsforum.com/](https://faithsforum.com/)



### **YourBikeProject CIC**

Your Bike Project provides an exit strategy for young people who are involved in violence, gangs, and NEETs through bike repair, training, community events, volunteering and employment as trainees and bike mechanics. The project finds unclaimed and abandoned bikes to fix and use, encouraging a healthier lifestyle, mental wellbeing and social cohesion.

[yourbikeproject.org/](https://yourbikeproject.org/)

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### **Foodcycle Kilburn, St Cuthbert's Church West Hampstead**

This project is a joint venture of the charity Foodcycle and St Cuthbert's Church. The partnership has stood for roughly four years and they provide weekly community meals for up to 80 people. The food would otherwise have been thrown away by supermarkets and what's left is distributed to attendees, eliminating waste.

[foodcycle.org.uk/location/foodcycle-kilburn/](https://foodcycle.org.uk/location/foodcycle-kilburn/)

## **Royal Veterinary College Islamic Society**

Founded in 2022 with 25 members and now up to 65, the Student Islamic Society creates a safe environment for staff and students alike. They have run cultural evenings, interfaith fairs, Islamic studies classes, Arabic calligraphy classes, Ramadhan Iftars, and non-alcoholic socials both on and off campus, as well as held numerous fundraising initiatives for charity.

[rvcsu.org.uk/clubs-socs/7159/](https://rvcsu.org.uk/clubs-socs/7159/)

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## **Highgate Black Women's Wellness Group**

The Highgate Black Women's Wellness Group was set up during Covid to support black women by having various support groups for socialisation and connection. They have so far run Dine & Mingle evenings; offered financial advice and grant application assistance; and run free day trips to art and cultural spots in London.

[highgateblackwomen.com/](https://highgateblackwomen.com/)

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## **Think & Do Camden**

Think & Do Camden focuses on building and working within an ecosystem of local organisations, businesses, schools, the council and local residents to find solutions to environmental or social challenges. The project plants trees on estates; works with local business on sustainability issues; and has opened underused space for people to come and do climate action.

[thinkanddocamden.org.uk/](https://thinkanddocamden.org.uk/)

## **Community Creates, The Winch**

Community Creates has provided over 60 free arts workshops for Camden residents since 2022. Local artists ran a myriad of different activities, from Zumba, to knitting, to creative writing and choirs. They have worked across faiths in North Camden to inspire community-led change, empower residents to improve their local neighbourhoods and let residents shape the areas in which they live.

[thewinch.org/](http://thewinch.org/)

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## **Interfaith Programme, MWLLO**

The Muslim World League London Office's interfaith programme aims to bring people from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds closer together. They run educational visits; a neighborhood and Faith Leaders Iftar project; collaborate with Camden Faith Leaders on joint initiatives; and the mosque is a hub for the Muslim community too.

[mwlllo.org.uk/](http://mwlllo.org.uk/)

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## **Holborn Social Group, Faith to Faithless**

Founded in 2015, Holborn Social Group provide peer support groups and social groups for those leaving high-control religious groups. They train statutory and support organisations like the police, social services, and mental health organisations to better understand the issues faced, and the policy and practice implications.

[faithtofaithless.com/](http://faithtofaithless.com/)

## **Transgender Day of Remembrance/Centring Transgender Lives Services, Rosslyn Hill Unitarian Chapel**

In conjunction with the annual Transgender Day of Remembrance and with Mitzvah Day, Rosslyn Hill Chapel held two community services focusing on the transgender experience, partnering with LGBTQI+ organisations and places of worship. They commemorated lives lost to violence and included music, readings and art, including for the first time a second, artistically-driven service, welcoming and highlighting an often marginalised community.

[rosslynhillchapel.org.uk/](http://rosslynhillchapel.org.uk/)

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## **Naz and Matt Foundation**

Naz and Matt Foundation is a small, specialist front-line, grassroots charity based in Camden providing comprehensive trauma informed 1-2-1 and group support services to LGBTQI+ individuals experiencing abuse, and from religious and culturally conservative backgrounds. Over 95% of users are of South Asian heritage and in the past year have supported over 330 members and given 1-2-1 support to 173 individuals.

[nazandmattfoundation.org/](http://nazandmattfoundation.org/)

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## **Kilburn State of Mind**

Kilburn State of Mind is a charity focused on wellbeing - using music and IT training as a hook for informal and formal learning and connecting. They run I.T, computing, music and artistic workshops to people who otherwise may not have the opportunity to learn. They focus on areas of the community that have the least opportunities and that are most impoverished.

[kilburnstateofmind.com/](http://kilburnstateofmind.com/)

# TACKLING POVERTY

Camden is pleased to work in collaboration with so many partners through the Tackling Poverty Forum to address this social injustice. Projects within this category provide support, advice and access to services for those experiencing a wide range of inequalities. These may include homelessness, food poverty, and projects in response to the Cost-of-Living crisis.

## Winner

### **Lifeafterhummus Community Benefit Society**

Lifeafterhummus is a BME-led Community Benefit Society which provides essential support to families and individuals through their 'Room of Things' initiative. They give access to clothing, household items, stationary and other essentials. They conduct outreach sessions, operate surplus food carts, and plan to reintroduce cooking classes and waste prevention activities. They address food insecurity with collection points and promote community wellbeing through partnership with schools, Camden Council and the GLA.

[lifeafterhummus.com/](http://lifeafterhummus.com/)



### **HandsOn London**

HandsOn London is a charity with a mission to make volunteering accessible and flexible for busy Londoners. Their long-standing projects – Brighten Up London and Wrap Up London revitalise green spaces with the help of volunteers and provide warm clothing to those in need respectively.

[handsonlondon.org.uk/](http://handsonlondon.org.uk/)

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### **JW3 Foodbank**

JW3 is a Jewish Community and Arts Centre and its foodbank has distributed over 500,000 meals since the start of Covid-19. Volunteers can work as a family in half-terms, preparing meals and learning skills while community events around giving and food poverty raise awareness and build resilience.

[jw3.org.uk/](http://jw3.org.uk/)



## **Soup Kitchen London**

Founded by the American International Church in 1986, Soup Kitchen London is now an independent charity. Supported by dedicated staff and volunteers, they serve over 1000 meals weekly to rough sleepers, elderly, and vulnerable individuals in the Tottenham Court Road area. Offering mental health support, clothing and legal advice, their aim is to provide holistic assistance to those in need.

[soupkitchenlondon.org/](http://soupkitchenlondon.org/)

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## **The Sherriff Centre**

The Sherriff Centre has been providing a range of vital community services since its founding in 2014. They house a free children's play area, cheap space for local groups, live music, and spaces for neighborhood dialogue sessions. They run The Food Share Project to tackle food poverty and alleviate food waste by taking unused food from larger shops and provide food parcels for 15 households.

[thesherriffcentre.co.uk/](http://thesherriffcentre.co.uk/)

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## **Camden Special Cooperative**

CSC addresses the scarcity of opportunities and aspirations for people with special needs by actively involving them in the community, fostering their integration, and addressing social, economic, and environmental challenges. The pilot Food Coop created a community for those with special needs to build skills and confidence while giving access to healthy, sustainable food.

[wemakecamden.org.uk/special-cooperative/](http://wemakecamden.org.uk/special-cooperative/)

## **SPCA Community Kitchen and Warm Space**

The community kitchen and warm space initiative has been running since 2022. Designed to provide nutritious meals and place to get warm while making friends, the initiative supports roughly 100 people per week. They also signpost to further support systems like legal help, wellbeing activities, clothing or toddler drop-ins.

[spca.org.uk/](https://spca.org.uk/)

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## **Streets Food Project, London Community Church**

Streets Food Project is a food parcel project run by London Community Church. Currently they produce roughly 100 food parcels each week and distribute them to about 60 families who drop in to the O2 shopping centre venue. Volunteers go to supermarkets to collect food, head to the O2 to set up space and pack food parcels before distributing.

[londonchurch.org/](https://londonchurch.org/)

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## **Breakfast on the Steps, The Swiss Church**

Run by 15 volunteers in total, Breakfast on the Steps provides weekly breakfasts to homeless people in Camden every Tuesday. They also bring other service providers in, like hairdressers once a month and provision of toiletries, to ensure the clients have dignity and nutritious meals.

[swisschurchlondon.org.uk/church/local-community/](https://swisschurchlondon.org.uk/church/local-community/)

# WELCOMING AND SUPPORTING REFUGEES

Camden is proud of its pledge to become a Borough of Sanctuary and is committed to welcoming and helping refugees. Projects in this category provide a range of support to refugees which may include friendship and mentoring, information and advice, education and employment opportunities and exploring culture and heritage through food and events.

## Winner

### Hopscotch Women's Centre

Hopscotch women's centre helped settle over 1500 refugees from Afghanistan since 2021, advocating for women's role particularly in the process. They helped train council staff on cultural understanding, supported many in bridging hotels, developed people's skills and knowledge and got people into their own accommodations in the borough.

[hopscotchuk.org/](https://hopscotchuk.org/)



### Zubeda Welcome

Zubeda Welcome is a charity with the niche focus of helping vulnerable UK refugees and asylum seeker's children retain their faith during difficult times. They provide tailored Islamic education for refugees and asylum seekers, allowing them to preserve their faith and cultural identity.

[zubedawelcome.org/](https://zubedawelcome.org/)

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### Support for Asylum Seekers, MCC North London

MCC London provides vital support to LGBTQI+ asylum seekers fleeing persecution, offering services like letters crucial for asylum claims and emotional support during detention. Volunteers offer pastoral care, accompany individuals to hearings, and provide practical aid, including housing and job assistance.

[mccnorthlondon.org.uk/support-for-asylum-seekers/](https://mccnorthlondon.org.uk/support-for-asylum-seekers/)

## **Refugee Project, Coram's Fields**

Working alongside other voluntary and community partners and Camden Council, Coram's Fields were at the forefront of the response to the Afghan refugee crisis, supporting families as they made the extremely difficult transition from the conflict they had fled in Afghanistan. Navigating language, resource and travel barriers, they provided drop-in sessions to signpost the best resources for refugees as well as providing access to their youth centre and sports teams.

[coramsfields.org/](https://coramsfields.org/)

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## **Refugee Befriending Programme, AIC & HostNation**

Running since 2023, the Refugee Befriending Programme has been a joint initiative of the American International Church and HostNation. They have run a programme designed to connect socially isolated asylum seekers and refugees with volunteer befrienders. They've run four separate supper club days to advance the project, further bringing people together.

[amchurch.co.uk/serve/refugee-support/](https://amchurch.co.uk/serve/refugee-support/)

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## **Ukrainian Hub O2 Finchley Road**

The Ukrainian Hub was created in 2022 following the mass migration following the conflict. There are 10 to 15 volunteers who work to support the refugees. The hub provides clothing, toys, home appliances, kitchenware, hygiene products and even furniture. There is also English language assistance and masterclasses in new skills for mental health support.

[facebook.com/groups/796489831362983/](https://facebook.com/groups/796489831362983/)

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## **Somali Cultural Centre Camden**

The Somali Cultural Centre Camden offers refugees legal advice, support for parents and children with any ongoing issues and supports residents with any issues they may have. They provide support and guidance to help people integrate locally and be part of Camden life.

[somaliculturalcentre.org/](https://somaliculturalcentre.org/)

# INSPIRING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Camden is committed to creating opportunities for our young people, one of our We Make Camden Missions. Projects within this category work with young people to encourage leadership, development, participation or volunteering and create opportunities for young people to have new experiences and be inspired by each other as well as others.

## Winner

### **Youth and Sports Programme, King Cross Brunswick Neighbourhood Association**

The Youth and Sports Programme has offered a huge range of activities for young people in Camden to both enjoy themselves, but also learn, get empowered and take part in civic life, as well as learn new skills. Young people can go to youth clubs, do sports, get free meals, have employment training, do cooking and learn about mental and sexual health. The programme has reached over 200 young people across their centre-based activities in the past year.

[kcbna.org.uk/](http://kcbna.org.uk/)



### **Mosaic LGBT+ Young Persons' Trust**

Mosaic works with young LGBTQI+ people and helps them navigate a sometimes challenging intersection of LGBTQI+ identity and faith. They have done so by hosting numerous panels with LGBTQI+ faith leaders showcasing a path to reconciliation.

[mosaictrust.org.uk/](http://mosaictrust.org.uk/)

### **You Can, St Mary's Centre Community Trust**

Now in its third year, Mary's runs a six-week course for young people called You Can, designed to give young people a chance to process their emotions towards change. The project provides certification in Emotional Resilience for young Camdeners, registered with OCN, that help with employability skills and give space to process in a safe way, with 100% of beneficiaries eligible for free school meals.

[maryscharity.org/](http://maryscharity.org/)

## **Pro Touch SA**

Pro Touch SA, since 2006, have championed community health and wellbeing in London. Their innovative programmes, overseen by award-winning staff, serve over 1000 children weekly, addressing physical and mental wellness. They've reduced crime rates in areas where they operate by 15% through community-building initiatives.

[protouchsa.co.uk/](http://protouchsa.co.uk/)

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## **Somali Youth Development Resource Centre**

SYDRC has been operational since 2000 and is a youth-led organisation, providing activities and services for young people, with focus on education, mentoring, and physical and mental wellbeing activities. Their vision is of a society where Somali young people can reach their full potential.

[sydrc.org/](http://sydrc.org/)

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## **icandance Community Leaders**

The icandance community leaders promote inclusion in the workplace and empower the voices of young community leaders with lived experience of disability. Young disabled people coach dance in the Primary Arts Touring Programme, co-facilitate movement workshops and speak at schools, educating and empowering in the process.

[icandance.org.uk/](http://icandance.org.uk/)

# OUTSTANDING INDIVIDUALS

Camden is full of inspirational individuals, people who make a lasting contribution to the life of our borough. This category is an opportunity to recognise the contribution of individuals who have gone above and beyond to make a difference. These individuals inspire others through their acts of public service, which are matched by their attitudes and values, exemplifying Camden as a welcome place for people of all faiths and beliefs.

## Winners

### Stuart Diamond

Stuart Diamond is Chief Executive of Mitzvah Day. Mitzvah Day is a small team of three full-time staff that has grown to be an internationally recognised initiative, growing volunteering networks and charity exposure for nearly 20 years. Stuart has overseen this work, coordinating 55,000 people in over 40 countries.



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### Matt Mahmood-Ogston

Matt is the founder of the Naz and Matt Foundation, a Camden-based charity. Matt has worked extensively to ensure that the charity has a truly diverse and representative leadership and staff team. Matt works personally to support hundreds of individuals on a multitude of platforms. For many clients, Camden is a safe space because of Matt's work.



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### Sharley Newitt

Sharley spearheads the NW5 project, dramatically increasing their output under her watch and now helping over 300 children. She has advocated for homeless youth as well as providing safe spaces to children and young people to train, learn life skills and have a space to have fun.



## **Anna Kusner**

Anna started as a volunteer at Castlehaven food bank in 2020 and is now the manager, a permanent part time role. The food bank has supported over 700 households since its 2020 inception. Anna has gone above and beyond in her role, attracting sponsorships, partnerships, leading on community initiatives and helping food bank users have access to the full range of services and benefits they need.

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## **Benaifer Bhandari**

Benaifer is CEO of Hopscotch Women's Centre and a trustee of the Naz and Matt Foundation. Benaifer is also an Out and Proud parent, who regularly talks on national media about the importance of acceptance in religious communities for LGBTQI+ children.

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## **Fathi Labidi**

Fathi is the Imam and Camden Faith Leaders representative at the Muslim World League London Office. He has promoted interfaith tirelessly through his work, organising events for people of different backgrounds and religions to meet, talk and promote understanding and tolerance for all.

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## **Slaney Devlin**

Slaney has dedicated voluntary time to Somers Town for over a decade, advocating for community needs. A leader in various local organisations, forums and educational bodies, ensuring community voices are heard. She meticulously reviews planning submissions, fought legal battles for heritage preservation, and collaborated on air quality research with UCL.



## **Margaret Harvey**

A member of Our Lady Help of Christians, Kentish Town, Margaret plays an integral role in community life with dedication to community, schools and excellence in leadership. She chairs the trustees at Kentish Town Community Centre and is part of SankTus – a community project which offers meals, support and friendship to the homeless and vulnerable. She is also governor and chair to a number of schools in the borough.

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## **Tony Ostrin**

Tony is the interfaith representative at Hampstead Synagogue and has facilitated numerous visits for young people from various faith backgrounds and organised panel discussions among local religious leaders. He's a consistent presence at community conversations and interfaith initiatives, fostering communication and understanding for the Jewish community in Camden.

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## **Sahra Salah Ali**

Sahra has been a beacon for community engagement in the Somali community over the past 30 years. Sahra has supported tuition centers and primary schools and served as a family link for the community, offering bespoke cultural after-school activities. She has worked with mothers and daughters on mental health stigma in minority communities, as well as being a first point of contact for those in dangerous situations relating to gang violence and crime.

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## **Mohiadin Wagad**

Over 15 years, Mohiadin has worked in multiple schools in Camden as a Link Worker, ensuring young people from marginalised communities get adequate representation. He has worked across Camden and Islington Somali communities, supporting weekend supplementary school, helping integrate migrants, offering access to services and providing translations. Mohiadin has also consistently volunteered his time with various charities and organisations in Camden, including SYDRC, British Somali Community, Somali Cultural Centre and the Somali Community Development Trust.

## **Sally Hay**

Sally is a trained, volunteer school speaker for Humanists UK. She also works as a celebrant and pastoral care practitioner, based in Camden and has visited schools and volunteered for three years. Speaking from her personal experiences, she provides unique insight for a range of ages, raising awareness of humanism.

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## **Jill Bradford**

Jill has led the Autistic Adult Choir for over ten years. Working in Camden and North London for many years, she has provided a safe, welcoming environment to meet everyone's needs. The choir has performed at the Camden Autism Partnership Board, Camden Autism Acceptance Events and the Good Life Camden event.

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## **Shirley Taylor**

Shirley is the school chaplain at La Sainte Union School and has been for twenty years. She has worked with young people on numerous interfaith projects, worked with London Citizens on the London Living Wage campaign, and on sustainability by leading on rewilding the school with gardening groups. She routinely demonstrates faith in action.

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## **Malihe Sadeghipour**

Malihe runs a project called food for homeless people in Camden, which cooks and delivers hot and nutritious food to people in need, as well as providing other essential items. Through the project, Malahe has personally delivered over 4000 meals, providing essential support to alleviate food poverty in the borough.

# CREDITS AND SPONSORS

The Camden Faith & Belief Community Awards would not have been possible without the support and contribution of several key people.

Thanks to the Partners and Awards Committee: Halima Khanom, Rosie Tharp, Cllr Nadia Shah, Cllr Rebecca Filer, John Muir, Sue Sheehan and Benaifer Bhandari.

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Thanks to the Belsize Square Synagogue quartet and Tenzin Choenyi and Tenzin Choekyi from the Martsang Kagyu UK Buddhist Centre for your wonderful performances.

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# STAY IN TOUCH

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