



# Annual Report 2019



Nottingham  
**Muslim Women's**  
Network

## Introduction

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**I was very honoured to be approached by Nottingham Muslim Women's Network to write this annual report for 2019, having also written the report last year. Due to the scrupulous and meticulous records kept by the Network, this has not been a difficult task. The Network takes its accountability to the public and to funding agencies and supporters very seriously and it has been a delight to read through funding applications, evaluation records and reports, social media and website posts as well as have conversations with both staff and management committee members.**

All annual reports are written several months after the year end, I feel that it is vital to say that this report was written during a time when the city, country and many countries around the world have been placed on 'lockdown' due to Covid-19. With much of the work of the Network affected by this and facing a future which is even more uncertain than that in austerity alone it makes me, as a citizen of Nottingham, and long-time quietly cheering ally of the Network to express gratitude for the work they do in the city and the example they set for people doing similar work in other parts of the UK.

Like many people blessed to have outdoor space, I have used the garden to reflect on life more generally but also the present and future work of the network. All avid gardeners will tell you that, watching old favourites return to the garden, the preparing the soil, the choice of what to grow, the watering and feeding of the seeds and plants, the patience required, the joy of seeing plants grow into food and the delight of enjoying homegrown produce are some of the many delights of the practice. So, it is with the Network. They have not only had projects which have come back or continued as a result of previous efforts, they have also tried new approaches and in this they have not been afraid to be experimental which is an absolute requirement in work where only new approaches can be used to try to meet unmet needs of Muslim women in the city. Whilst this inevitably will have had its disappointments where garden pests and the weather, can frustrate even the best of efforts, there are also unplanned, unexpected pleasures and triumphs.

As we work our way through the challenging and worrying times, we must not forget to celebrate the work of the Network, learn from that work, and think about what the Network can do now and in the future to ensure that it is a thriving organisation, sustaining its activities, and doing what it can to mitigate the effects of unwanted but inevitable opposition to its important and very necessary work.

**Lisa Robinson, Activist and Community Organiser**





## About Nottingham Muslim Women's Network

NMWN is a diverse network of Muslim women, sharing knowledge and voicing the needs of Muslim women in a safe environment, providing a platform to ensure they are included in decision making processes to influence local policy and strategic development of services. We endeavour to bring about effective change through lived experiences and knowledge and develop and deliver appropriate workshops around unaddressed issues affecting Muslim women. Our target group is primarily Muslim girls and women aged 13 upwards, however we welcome all women.

### We provide:

- Legal advice surgeries
- Drop in sessions
- Training and workshops
- Community events to promote wellbeing
- Opportunities to encourage inclusion and cohesion
- Awareness raising and campaigning on unaddressed issues affecting Muslim Women
- Information, advice and guidance.
- Referral and signposting to specialist services

The Network is the only one of its kind in Nottingham providing a place for Muslim women in the city to access information, get non-judgemental support services and potentially take their place as community advocates and activists in their own right.

This year we worked on a new mission statement to communicate clearly and succinctly, the work of the Network.

### Our Mission

Nottingham Muslim Women's Network is a grassroots community organisation.

We ensure local Muslim women's voices are heard, and their needs are met.

Every policy pushed,  
every decision made,  
every campaign delivered  
is directed by the lived  
experiences of Muslim women.

We speak to women about important issues that matter to them, such as harmful cultural practices, honour-based abuse, FGM, hate crime and discrimination.

We are deeply trusted throughout the community and our understanding of these important issues means we're uniquely able to offer the best support and advice. Listening to these voices, we act as a bridge, channelling the experiences and opinions of our community to inform policy makers, mainstream services and frontline professionals, to create positive change.

We want Muslim women of all ages to achieve their full potential. That is why we work hard to support the next generation of Muslim women, empowering them as role models who can shape the lives of those around them.

We are here for the whole community to challenge attitudes that hold Muslim women back so all Muslim women in Nottingham can succeed.

## Co-Chairs' Report

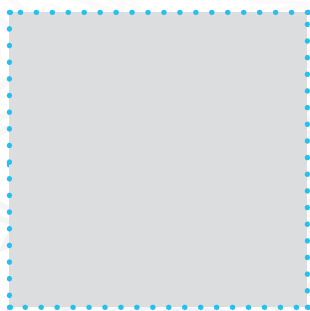
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2019 has been an extremely exciting year at the network, a year in which a website and an animation video were produced in partnership with M & C Saatchi. A year in which we continued to engage, inform, and empower Muslim women in Nottingham through the innovative development and delivery of workshops that really matter to them. We continued to build partnerships with other Nottingham City organisations and continued to bridge the gap between statutory services and Muslim women.

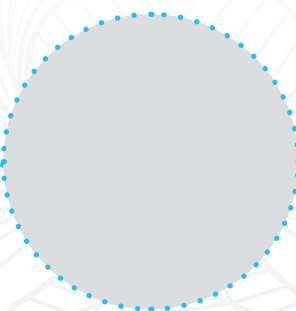
Over the past five years, the network has been organically growing, tackling 'big' topics but with small budgets. As our confidence increased, we took on more ambitious projects such as the Freedom Programme in Urdu and Mirpuri Punjabi and the Community Activism Programme.

Our outreach service has also grown from providing a sign-posting service to providing advocacy and support well beyond the normal 9 to 5pm working hours. This year the outreach service provided support to four women with no recourse to funds, two of whom required emergency accommodation, food and out of hours support. An estimated 36 hours of 'extra' out of hours' time. An issue we raised with the leader of Nottingham in September 2019, our concerns about the lack of support available to those with no recourse to public funds and survivors of domestic abuse were taken seriously. We would like to thank all our donors and partners for their valuable support and effort in taking our campaigns and events forward. The local authority and police continued to partner our work bringing realistic holistic change to the needs of the Muslim community and beyond.

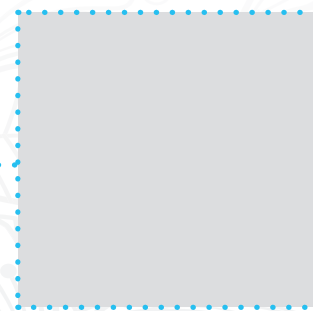
We have a committed and passionate team of workers, activists and community organisers working to achieve the strategic aims and objectives of the Network.



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## Our Team

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### Management Team

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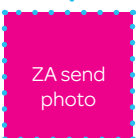
#### Shazia Khan

Co-chair and founder of Nottingham Muslim Women's Network with over 20 years of community development experience including campaigning for and championing the rights of Muslim Women. At the 2018 AGM meeting on the 5th of July 2019, Shazia Khan stepped down from the position of Co-Chair and was elected as the Treasurer for the Network.



#### Councillor Neghat Khan

Co-Chair an elected member of the City Council, advocate of women's rights and a founder of the Network.



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#### Barrister Miriam Yaffi

A vastly experienced Family Law Barrister at St Mary's Chambers. Her expertise includes domestic abuse, FGM and other issues affecting Muslim women in the British legal system.



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#### Maxine Cockett

A community development worker and activist with over 40 years of grassroots experience supporting vulnerable women and families. She is a Freedom Programme practitioner and has supported numerous women facing domestic abuse and violence, helping many to leave abusive relationships.



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#### Liberty Henry

An experienced support worker with Muslim women employed by Muslim Hands, working on the prison resettlement project.



#### Marsha Brown

A specialist within domestic abuse with nearly two decades of experience supporting women and children to live free from domestic abuse and violence, joined the management team on the 5th of July 2019 and was elected as the Co-chair



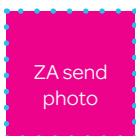
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#### Harriet Willcocks

Working for Juno Women's Aid and bringing her specialism of working with MARAC (Multi Agency Referral Assessment Conferences) to the team was also elected as a new member to the management committee team on the 5th of July 2019.



## Staff Team 2019



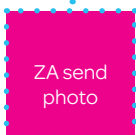
### Co-ordinator: Zaynab Asghar

This is third year that Zaynab has been working on behalf of the Network, coordinating our projects and staff, bringing a consistent approach to our vision, and working alongside the management committee to input into the strategic direction of the organisation.



### Administrator: Shanaz Din

Our Administrator supports the daily running of NMWN, booking appointments the legal surgery and facilitating registration at drop-in services. She deals with telephone enquiries, supports the day to day management of our website and undertakes general office duties.



### Outreach: Samina Kouser

Samina joined the outreach service in January 2019 and began supporting Muslim women around issues of honour based abuse, domestic violence and immigration. Funded by the Communities of Identity Fund administered by the Women's Centre, she began providing vital support to women who in their own words said 'all doors of help closed to us'

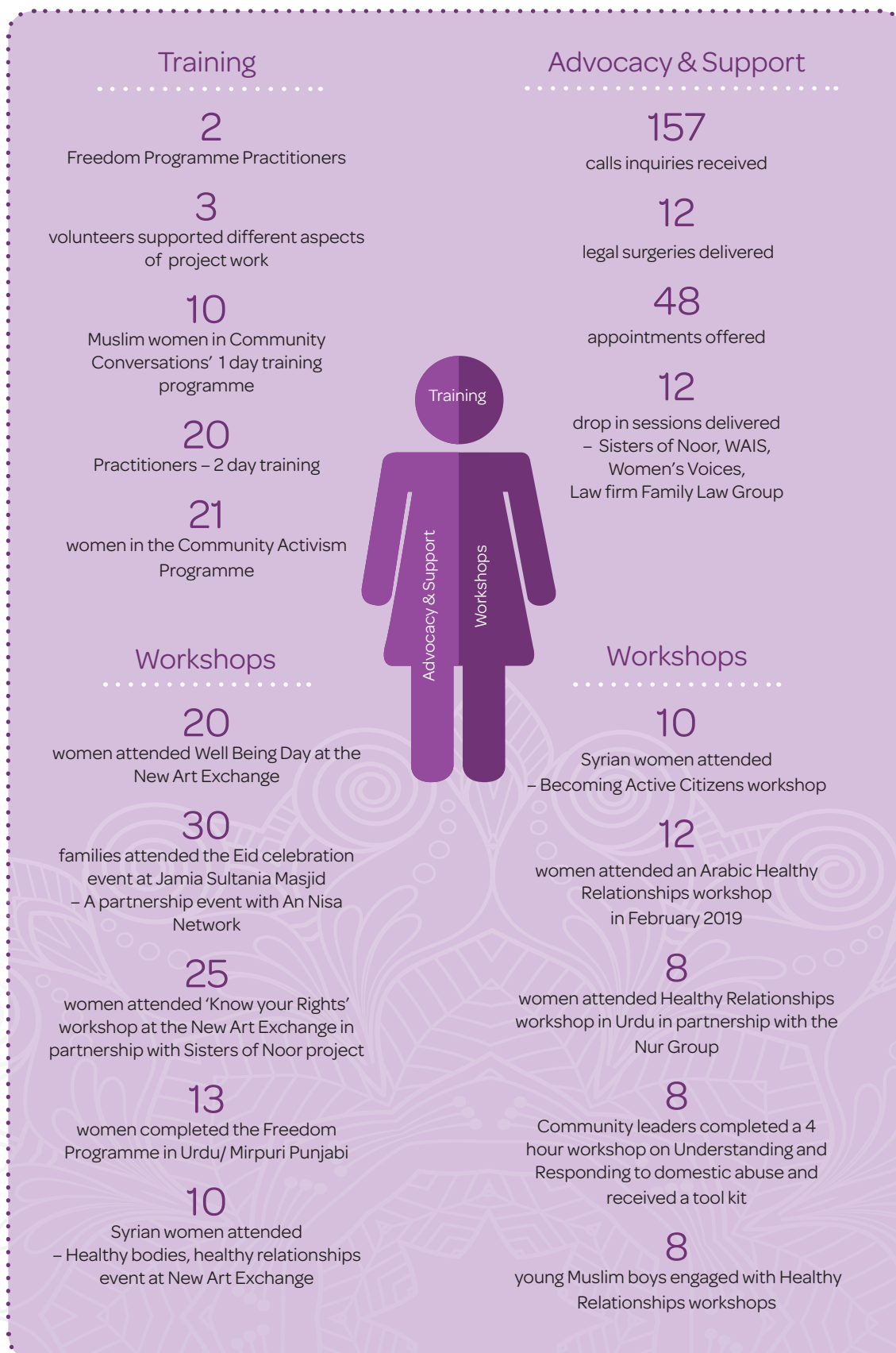
## Membership

Nottingham Muslim Women's Network is a membership organisation made up of local women. We keep in touch with members via our mailing list and also through social media and WhatsApp groups. Occasionally we organise meet ups for members. This year we organised an event at the Women's Centre to talk about hate crime. It included guest speakers from Nottingham City Council who covered the seven strands of hate crime. We also jointly evaluated the 'Not in Nottingham' anti-hate campaign as well as identifying reasons why women do not report hate crime which then led to a conversation about how we can encourage more women to come forward and services to be more accessible as well as ideas for tackling this issue in the city. The event wrapped up with complementary therapies for attendees. It is important that our members felt nurtured after holding difficult and emotional conversations.

We undertake outreach work in the community to engage new members and also prospective members to get in contact via our social media, email or telephoning us directly.



## 2019 in Numbers





## Our Projects 2019

### Community Activists Programme

After a successful bid to Building a Stronger Britain Together (BSBT), the network developed and delivered two community leadership and empowerment courses in July and in November targeted at Muslim women. The aim was to identify and equip 30 women activists to be able to outreach in the community to provide counter messages to challenging oppressive and harmful traditional cultural practices and attitudes and to share knowledge and signpost women to support services. In particular, we envisaged that the community activists would send out a clear message of zero tolerance to honour based abuse, forced marriage, FGM, hate and domestic abuse, and help to find ways in which women could help create positive change in the community.



Each of the courses was made up of five workshops. We tried two formats - the July workshops being held over five weeks and after gathering feedback from participants the November workshops being held over 2 full days (Saturdays). The second format also included creche provision, and lunch (funded by our own reserves) and built on the success of the first and this is the format that we would use in future delivery. All sessions were delivered by informed specialists from Juno Women's Aid, Mojatu and Nottingham City Council, who could build knowledge and understanding of participants as well as their practical skills and access to resources to help activists in communicating the key messages and being able to refer women to specialist services.

We wanted to communicate clearly that the subjugation of Muslim women, in the name of faith but based on culture, is wrong and will not be tolerated. Activists were equipped to be able to confidently challenge and safely support women who are either victims or survivors of harmful beliefs, practices, and attitudes.

Participants were aged between 22 and 48 and came from the Arab and Pakistani communities, although this did include a Hindu counsellor who worked with Muslim women. In total, 21 women were eventually trained, the majority being new to the Network. As a direct result of their engagement with the programme, one of the activists has since gained paid employment with the Network and another became a volunteer with our Freedom Programme.

The activist programme had numerous beneficiaries. Activists gained skills knowledge and understanding to support their activism. Activists on the first programme created a piece of artwork to communicate the purpose of their activism. This has been shared with other women through the Nottingham Mela and shared at International Women's Day celebrations. This is one of the ways in which women in the wider community were able to access information and resources provided by the activists and indeed, we have had women approaching the Network because of contact with community activists. Also, the Network was able to build stronger links with local organisations, and they in turn are beginning to see more Muslim women access their services.

## Our Projects 2019

### Know Your Rights

Many people (including Muslim women) think that Muslim women have no rights. This important and empowering workshop challenged this too-widely held view. We used the time to explore myths and misunderstandings, including Nikka Nama (Muslim marriage contract) and how empowered Muslim women can be with access to the right information and understanding.

The workshop was information-packed and the women had lots of questions which they were encouraged to write up onto notes so that we could address collective and individual concerns. Questions included general questions about the rights of women and children and more specific questions around...

- Protection orders for children
- Rights to child maintenance during separation and after divorce
- Fears and realities about men trying to take custody of children – legally or otherwise
- Partners with a history of violence, drug abuse and infidelity
- The role of a Muslim wife and a mother
- The protection of assets in a marriage and what to do if the man is hiding assets
- What to do where a man demanding repayment of mortgage payments he has made during the marriage and threats of homelessness where the woman refuses to pay these.
- Ensuring that UK and Islamic procedures are followed and how to deal with conflicts between the two
- Refuting reasons provided in the divorce petition



### Urdu, Mirpuri, Punjabi Freedom Programme

This year we continued our work to deliver the Freedom Programme in the local community. Working with Juno Women's Aid we started the programme later in the year and it will be continuing into 2020.

The programme is aimed at women aged 16 plus who are directly affected by the issues it covers. It runs over 8 weeks and includes:

- The traits, personas and warning signs of abuse
- Help and support for safety planning
- Gaining support from experts and other women
- Resources, advice and information

A full evaluation will be provided in our 2020 annual report.

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## Our Projects 2019

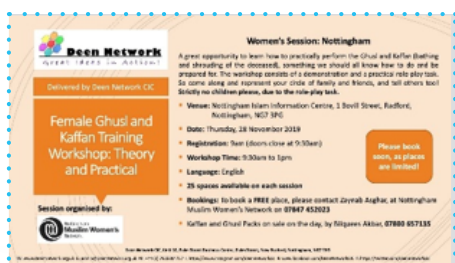
### Facilitation Training

It was a joy to work with the Ethelburga’s Centre for Reconciliation and Peace to hold this dynamic training in how to broach and hold down difficult and challenging community conversations which can pave the way for relationship building and effecting social change. women attended the training and this also proved to be an opportunity to support the professional development of our own staff at the Network. Funding for this work came from Near Neighbours which also enabled us to facilitate a number of conversations in the community.



Our involvement in Women’s Voices: The Great Get Together, and the Community Conversations event held by Nottingham Stands Together later on in the year are just of couple of the ways in which the training has influenced our work.

### Female Ghul and Kaffan Training Workshop



This is the first time that we have worked with the Deen Network to provide this training opportunity for women in shrouding loved ones. The session attracted 25 women and was attended by 23 women.

### Action on FGM (Female Genital Mutilation)

From 2018 Nottingham became a zero-tolerance city in relation to FGM. Mojatu Foundation has led the way on this and this year we intentionally continued to build our relationship with them. Last year we received funding from Near Neighbours for our FGM programme which extended into February this year. We got involved again in the Tree Planting Event at Frameco Farm which we attended last year. Transport for community members was provided to facilitate community involvement. This year we also held an FGM Conference to inform and educate the community about FGM and the local and national context.





## Our Projects 2019

### Healthy Relationships

This year we continued to deliver Healthy Relationships training in partnership with Equation. Unhealthy relationships are defined as relationships in which physical, sexual, psychological, or emotional violence take place. Many unhealthy relationships can be avoided by helping people to develop skills to create healthy relationships and by teaching them to recognize the signs of unhealthy relationships.

These sessions were open to Muslim women across the City of Nottingham and were delivered in partnership with local Muslim women's group.



### Wellbeing for Women

In April we held a wellbeing day at the New Art Exchange which included practical activities such as making gratitude jars and having a go at Yoga and alternative therapies. We had a tour of the NAE's main exhibition and women were invited to discuss what other activities they would like to see from the Network.



### Men Leading for Change 2



Funded by the PCC, In 2018 we ran a ground breaking pilot, Men Leading for Change. After submitting a full evaluation reports on the project, applications for further funding were successful leading to a second programme running from June 2018 to March 2019 and a third running from April 2019 to April 2020. (Please see the separate evaluation reports for more information about Men Leading for Change).



## Ongoing Service and Activities

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### Legal Advice

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This year we have continued to offer free legal advice about divorce, child contact, domestic abuse, female mutilation/ female genital mutilation, honour-based abuse and other family law related matters with funding from Awards for All. The legal clinic is open once a month at Mary Potter's Health Centre and is a booking only service. Women do not need to suffer in silence, and have a right to know and understand their legal position in an abusive and violent relationship. We use a local law, Family Law Group to provide the most up to date and accurate advice possible.

We also offer drop in sessions once a month, also at the Mary Potter Health Centre covering the family law issues and also other issues such as hate crime and housing. These sessions are used to find out about the experiences of girls and women. In term this enables us to inform policy and practice of our partner organisations, public bodies in the city and local government as well as our own priorities for future work and effort.



## Ongoing Service and Activities

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### Outreach

Towards the end of the year, Nottingham Muslim Women's Network advertised for a bilingual Outreach Worker to work flexibly 10 hours. The role of the post is to deliver drop-in sessions primarily but not exclusively supporting Muslim Women. The sessions will offer support to women who are in crisis or facing challenging circumstances. This will assist in enabling women to access mainstream services, which they currently do not access due to lack of awareness, language, cultural barriers and confidence. The post will also provide IAG (information advice and guidance) to enable women to get into education, training and work. This is an important post for us and will enable us to reach out to more women in the community, create awareness about the work of the network, signpost women to specialist services, increase uptake of our projects and activities and strengthen our partnership working in the city.



The case study below documents the level and type of support offered the service: Client attended advice session with a friend. Client arrived in UK on a spouse Visa. She has a two-year-old son. Client stated that she suffered from domestic violence from her husband and the extended family. She was thrown out of the family home and she contacted a friend in Nottingham to help her. Her friend brought her to her home in Nottingham where she had been living for the past three weeks before attending the advice session. Both Rotherham and Nottingham City Council refused to take responsibility for mother and child. The friend could no longer accommodate the client and wanted her out of the house. As a network we:

- 1) Spent two days at Loxley House trying to negotiate with Nottingham and Rotherham City Council Social Services to provide support to client and child.
- 2) Contacted Women's Aid for advice and support, but due to client having no recourse to public funds, support was extremely limited. However, eventually they did get their legal team to contact Nottingham City Council.
- 3) Provided emergency accommodation to mother and child for 7 nights with breakfast through network funds and family/donations.
- 4) Organised a solicitor to complete the domestic violence concession form and managed to obtain funding from Muslim Hands to support with the accommodation.
- 5) Continued to support client until she was housed in a women's refuge.





## Website and Social Media

We were successful in securing support in kind from BSBT for website development and we worked with them to produce text, graphics and film to communicate mission, vision and everyday work NMWN in accessible and engaging way. NMWN has an active presence on social media platforms and we use this to promote activities of the network and our partner organisation, but also to raise more general awareness about issues facing Muslim Women, including:

- Sexual abuse and links to pornography
- Forced and abusive marriages
- Honour based violence
- Mental health and depression
- Structural racism, gendered Islamophobia and anti-blackness
- Misogyny
- Hate crime
- Underrepresentation engaging in decision making in the city (including voting in elections)

The issues we deal with are highly sensitive, distressing and upsetting. We encourage women to get in touch with us where these issues have resonance in their own lives.

We also use our social media to share inspiring stories of Muslim women, the things we are doing to promote positive changes and our contributions to Nottingham, the UK and the globe.

### Reaching out to Non-Muslim Women

Whilst the NMWN aims to benefit Muslim women, many of our activities support the involvement of all women. Part of our role is to create awareness and more understanding about the Muslim faith to promote a common appreciation of our shared humanity. It was wonderful to invite women from all communities to our Eid event this year which provided a safe space to simply share tea, conversation, and mutual understanding. We provided entertainment for children and henna and massage for women attending as well as free refreshments. The event was held in partnership with An Nisa Network and women from the Sneinton area of Nottingham and supported with a small grant from Nottingham Together.



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## Networking and Partnership Working

Partnership working is critical to the work of the network and most the activities already described in this report have depended on working closer with other community groups and initiatives in Nottingham. The Fempowerment event on International Women’s day is an excellent example of Nottingham groups and organisations coming together to deliver an inspirational and uplifting event attracting women from across our diverse communities.

We strengthened our relationship with Nottingham Stands Together this year, holding several events together.

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We would like to say a huge thank you to all our funders and partners, already mentioned in this report, for working together to make 2019 another year to be proud of.

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<h3>Partners</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An Nisa Network</li> <li>• Deen Network</li> <li>• Ethelburgas Centre for Reconciliation and Peace</li> <li>• Equation</li> <li>• Juno Women’s Aid</li> <li>• Mojatu Foundation</li> <li>• New Art Exchange</li> <li>• Nottingham City Council</li> </ul>	<h3>Funders</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nottingham Stands Together</li> <li>• Nottingham Together</li> <li>• Nur women’s group in Sneinton</li> <li>• Sisters of Noor</li> <li>• WAIS</li> <li>• Women’s Voices</li> <li>• Family Law</li> </ul>
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- Building A Stronger Britain Together
- Near Neighbours
- Nottinghamshire Police and Crime Commissioner
- Nottingham City Council (Communities of Identity)



## Contact us

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