



Nottingham  
**Muslim Women's**  
Network

# Annual Report 2020

“

A diverse network of women,  
sharing knowledge and voicing  
the needs of Muslim women  
in Nottingham

”





## Introduction...

Authoring this report in March 2021, it is difficult to believe that it is a year since the country entered the first COVID-19 Lockdown. This report outlines the project work, services, outreach work and network building that Nottingham Muslim Women's Network (NMWN) engaged in over the year. 2020 was a year of challenges and blessing as the Network learned new ways of being as an organisation in the midst of a pandemic.

What services could continue, and how could the network adapt to meet the needs of Muslim women whilst keeping all involved safe? How could the organisation communicate to communities the latest news and guidance in a culturally appropriate and accessible way?

There is a saying that goes something like "if you can't go out, go within". The Network used this peculiar and challenging time to strategically think about what could be done to strengthen the position of the Network. How could the capacity needs of the organisation be met during COVID-19, and, future gazing, what could the Network do to imagine a stronger organisation coming out of it and going forward into a post-COVID-19 world? We built activities in response to the crisis to provide information and successfully secured funding from the Awards for All COVID-19 Fund to increase staff hours. Ministry of Justice funding enabled us to secure hours for our Coordinator. Rosa Small grants allowed us to increase staff hours for outreach work and employ a Communications Officer. The Imkaan and Rosa BME Covid Response Fund supported the Network to start to develop a specialist domestic violence (DV) service in the network, providing us with a new part-time post and upgrades to our equipment to meet our changing technical needs. This funding allowed the Network to purchase three laptops and two chrome notebooks and helped pay for the Oasis Cloud Management System (CMS) we are currently using. It also enabled the recruitment of a new worker who works 16 hours a week.

Towards the end of 2020, I joined the Network as an external consultant to undertake strategic development work with the organisation. Activities are detailed later, but also included the preparation of this report.

One of the blessings of the year was that the staff and management committee team were able to meet more often as a full team. The Network used this time to talk about self and collective care, affirm the passion and commitment to the work and continue to build on the shared vision for the Network and the communities it serves.

A report about 2020, the year we saw the biggest anti-racism protests that the UK has ever seen, must reaffirm that Black Lives Matter and we will ensure that we constantly seek ways to ensure that Black Muslim women who need our services are fully able to access and use them.

NMWN stands in solidarity with Black Lives Matter.



Lisa Robinson,  
Bright Ideas Nottingham, March 2021



## About Nottingham Muslim Women's Network (NMWN)

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, knowledge and develop and deliver appropriate workshops around unaddressed issues affecting Muslim women. Our target group is primarily Muslim girls and women aged thirteen and older, 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 provides bespoke services in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire providing a place for Muslim women in the city and county to access information, get non-judgemental support services and potentially take their place as community advocates and activists.

## Our Mission

Every policy pushed, every decision made, every campaign delivered

Nottingham Muslim Women's Network is a grass-roots community organisation. We ensure local Muslim women's voices are heard, and their needs are met.

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 critical issues means we're uniquely 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.

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

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.

## Our Team

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

## Management Team



**Councillor Neghat Khan, Co-Chair.**

An elected member of Nottingham City Council, advocate of women's rights and has held a number of portfolios for Nottingham City Council.



**Marsha Brown, Co-Chair.**

A Freedom Programme practitioner and a specialist within domestic abuse with two decades of experience supporting women and children to live free from domestic abuse and violence.



**Shazia Khan, Treasurer.**

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. Shazia is a qualified Freedom Programme practitioner and has over twenty years of project management experience.



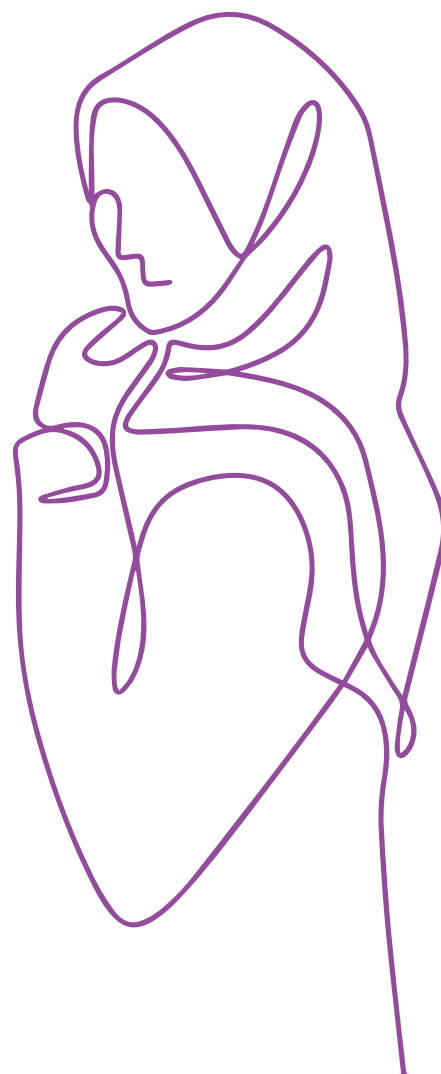
**Maxine Cockett, the founder and CEO of Breaking Barriers Building Bridges (BBBB)**

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.



**Harriet Willcocks, working for Juno Women's Aid**

Bringing her specialism of working with Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) referrals to the team.





## Membership

Nottingham Muslim Women's Network is a membership organisation made up of local women. We stay connected with members via our mailing list and 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 explained and illustrated the seven strands of hate crime.

We also jointly evaluated the 'Not in Nottingham' anti-hate campaign whilst identifying reasons why women do not report hate crime. This led to a conversation about how we can encourage more women to come forward and services to be more accessible as well as generating ideas for tackling this issue in the city. The event wrapped up with complementary therapies for attendees. It was important that our members felt nurtured after holding difficult and emotional conversations.

## 2020 Programmes and Projects

### Covid-19 Information Health and Well Being Zoom workshops

"Together, women make things happen! An incredibly powerful session."

### Calming Hearts Healing Minds attendee

During September and October 2020, we offered Natural Healing and Calming Hearts and Healing Minds workshops. These online events aimed to address COVID-19 related anxiety and stress in a time of rising infection rates. The Natural Healing workshops facilitated by Earth's Touch, explored ways of boosting our immune systems using natural remedies. The Calming Hearts and Healing Minds workshops facilitated by Danushia Kaczmarek- emotional wellbeing Life Coach, explored the relationship between the heart and mind and ways of achieving mental balance using tried and tested techniques. We reminded ourselves of the importance of self-care and looking within when it comes to dealing with our stresses and strains and preparing emotionally.

### Yoga in the Park

As the weather improved and COVID-19 numbers were falling we did a risk assessment and decided it was safe to hold socially distanced yoga classes with small numbers of women. We held these sessions at the Forest Recreation Ground. It was great to be outdoors, in nature and this is one of the physical activities we would like to reintroduce when conditions allow. Walking and cycling groups have also been suggested as activities we can use to address collective mental health and wellbeing for women.



## 2020 Programmes and Projects

### Online Surgery

In June 2020 our Chair, Councillor and Portfolio holder for Education Neghat Khan, held an online community meeting to talk about the reopening of schools. The workshop happened at a time when there was confusion and parents questioned if it would be safe for their children to return to school. Parents were struggling with feeding their children and as they were eligible for free school meals they asked if they could get food vouchers to help with the cost of feeding children whilst they were off school. People wanted to know about the measures that had been put in place to keep children safe and get schools ready to open. This workshop provided the opportunity for community members to ask questions and share their concerns.



### Safety Online

Over the summer and into the autumn, NMWN was at the forefront of community initiatives to address the online safety of both adults and children. The Internet has become an integral part of many of our lives and the real dangers of cyber bullying, fraud and grooming are as present as ever. In September 2020, funded by the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC), we held an interactive discussion on keeping safe online where we talked about the different apps and the dangers they pose as well as looking at practical ways to keep safe.



During the lockdown period, children were spending extended periods at home, and we felt that many people in the community were not thinking about the implications of this for the safety of our children and young people. We also partnered with the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) to provide parents and carers with information and advice to keep children and young people safe. Targeting mothers, we provided online learning platform facilitated by Alya Sultana from the NSPCC to educate them on the warning signs of grooming activities and the important preventative measures we can all take. The learning resources and activities were informed by real life examples. We held sessions in Urdu and Arabic as well as English to reach as many women as possible. They followed the model of the successful 'Know Your Rights' workshops held in 2019.



Receiving our funding at the Launch of the Community Safety Fund event





## 2020 Programmes and Projects

### Will Writing Workshops in English and Arabic

Tanveer Moughal (qualified solicitor) facilitated an important workshop about the importance of writing Wills. The session provided an introduction to inheritance law under the British legal system and from a religious perspective.

### The Second Freedom Programme

Following the successful completion of the first Freedom programme, we ran a second programme, again delivered in Urdu and Mirpuri in partnership with Juno Women's Aid and held at the Mary Potter Health Centre. The Freedom Programme provided a perfect vehicle to directly address issues affecting women. The 8-week programme 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

We continued to support many of the women who attended into the lockdown period.

### Freedom to Fly

This year we continued the Freedom to Fly project. A separate report provides details about this project and can be found on our website. (NK asked why is this not included in this report, plus what is the freedom to fly project?) – add more info about the report



## Services

### Legal Advice and Advocacy and Sign Posting Service

As the outbreak of Coronavirus became a reality for all with the first national lockdown in March 2020, we wanted to reassure women that NMWN was still in operation. Whilst all face-to-face interactions were put on hold, following Government guidelines, we continued with telephone calls and moved to virtual platforms like Zoom and WhatsApp.

We held monthly legal surgeries by telephone on the first Tuesday of every month with women being able to book by email or telephone.

The Drop-In Service was adapted to a telephone and online advocacy and sign posting service for women who do not have English as a first language and were struggling to navigate life during the lockdown. We offered language support in Urdu, Mirpuri Punjabi, assisting women with access to food banks, issues related to domestic abuse and immigration advice. Our work is always challenging and never more so than having to assist women to find burial space for loved ones that were lost during the pandemic.



### Information sharing

To complement the project work around Covid-19, we embarked upon an information sharing campaign to keep people safe. This included creating our own, culturally appropriate infographics as well as sharing information provided by relevant agencies.

We felt it was particularly important to share information about interventions supporting women with their mental health and wellbeing such as the powerful 'Equal Power' programme offered by MIND which also had a 24-hour helpline. We encouraged women to share this information widely in their social networks.



For those shielding or self-isolating, the Islam Centre provided a support service comprising information, advice, and practical support. We circulated this to members and more widely on our social media, again encouraging people to share this throughout the community.

### Specialist DV Service

"It's good to know that NMWN can still support me while in lockdown and I can leave if things at home continue to get bad"

(From a woman whose husband was at home 24/7 due to lockdown. She was extremely frightened that she and her children had nowhere to turn to if things got worse at home)

Our Domestic Violence Service continued to run throughout 2020. The Rosa and Imkaan BAME fund allowed the Network to recruit a new worker for 16 hours a week to develop a specialist aspect of the service. This made us the most responsive domestic violence service in the city at the time and we were able to offer our service to Nottingham City Council's Golden Number.

With the funding the Network also purchased three laptops and two chrome notebooks and helped pay for the Oasis Case Management System we are currently using. With this increased capacity we developed four videos highlighting domestic violence support services in community languages and developed a range of activities delivered by Zoom workshops.

Domestic abuse was a common denominator in the cases of the women we supported during the lockdown. We supported women who had moved to Nottingham via a refuge and now were trying to resettle in Nottingham but who struggled with life in the city, not knowing the system, services available, or the language.



## Services

### Support on domes

<https://www.facebook.com/nottinghammuslimwomensnetwork/videos/788854971640055>

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1829675230506035>

### Bengali

<https://www.facebook.com/nottinghammuslimwomensnetwork/videos/2699259843653428>

### Arabic

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=2885542668194292>

### Urdu

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=527150184635738>

This is the fourth 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.



## Outreach and Network Building

### Communications

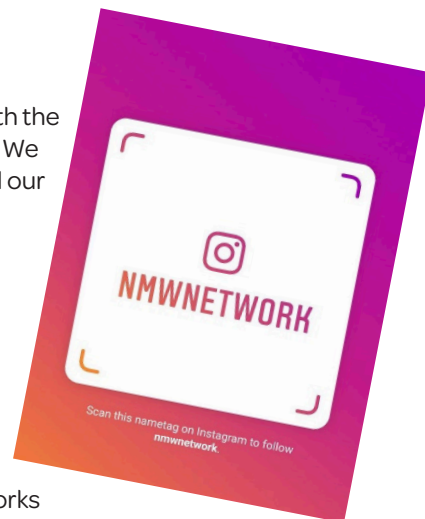
#### NMWN, now on Instagram

This year we recruited a Communications Officer which has enabled us to stay connected with the wider community at a time when community outreach work has been significantly restricted. We have improved our presence on social media (particularly Instagram) and have strengthened our communications strategy.

#### Representation of Muslim Women at boards

This year we have continued to work with Nottingham Together, a network comprising community and voluntary sector colleagues and Nottingham City Council workers. We have remained active in the Nottingham Together Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) subgroup. We have also attended Tell Mama group meetings. Tell Mama is a support service which brings together people who have experienced Islamophobia.

It is critical that Muslim women's voices are heard and involvement in these groups and networks are an effective way to ensure this.



#### Annual General Meeting

We held the Annual General Meeting (AGM) in January 2021. This was the first time we have held a virtual meeting and it was a remarkable success. Attendance was high and attendees participated in the conversations. The minutes from the AGM can be found on our website.

#### International Women's Day

Attendance at community events is always a joy, and one of the things that we have missed in 2020. We were, however, able to promote and support International Women's Day on 8 March. This year the event was held at the Council House giving women the opportunity to attend free workshops, share food and meet new people. Choose2challenge virtual campaign – Add photos and add link to the videos.

## Supporting Campaigns

### Campaigning Work

NMWN continued to support campaigns on domestic violence, sexual assault and hate crime as well as COVID-19 local and national campaign work already highlighted in this report.

We are developing a culturally appropriate Help A Friend Campaign in partnership with Equation.

We also created a Black Lives Matter statement of support (featured at the beginning of this report).

#### Justice for Shukri

Shukri Abdi was a 12-year-old Somali refugee girl who came to Manchester in 2017 under the UK's vulnerable person's resettlement scheme. It is heart breaking to think instead of feeling safe, Shukri was relentlessly bullied by her classmates who eventually murdered her by pushing her into a river and watching as she drowned. Despite a witness coming forward, her case was deemed an accident. Her murderers have not been held accountable.

#deeperthoughtsbyputy #ShukriAbdi #standupforpeace #justiceforshukriabdi #blacklivesmatter #dreamdead



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## Strategic Development and Future Plans

### Strategic Development

We used unrestricted funds to recruit a consultant to support the strategic development of the organisation. We selected Bright Ideas Nottingham because we have collaborated with them in the past from delivering our first visioning session, to writing our project reports and our last annual report. Bright Ideas Nottingham understands what the network is about and what we want to achieve.

### From October 2020 to December 2020, we set the following tasks:

- Assessing the organisation's strengths and limitations, identifying opportunities available and threats to the network
- Collating information enabling the Network to evaluate options for our legal structure.
- Reviewing policy documents
- Producing a new Social Media Policy
- Reviewing social media presence and ideas for attracting younger women to the Network
- Evaluating the Communications Strategy for the organisation and making recommendations
- Developing ideas for funding applications and a review of funding sources available to the network
- Designing staff and management development half-day workshops

### Plans for 2021 and beyond

Bright Ideas Nottingham will continue to work with the network into 2021. Together we will focus on:

- Applying to the Charity Commission to become a Community Incorporated Organisation (CIO)
- Refining NMWN constitution and vision to make sure it the organisation is fit for purpose for the new CIO.
- Working on funding applications (including Reaching Communities and Heritage Lottery Fund) to cover core staff and infrastructure costs
- Reviewing the organisational structure
- Revisiting and introducing the communications strategy to the whole team, address training and development needs to ensure all can contribute to the implementation of the strategy.
- Examining the networks representation on groups and forums in the city and identify where they need to have better representation of Muslim women– including how they work to strategies focussing on reducing violence to women and girls.
- Delivering a programme of staff and management committee development days.
- Refining the network's policies and staff handbook –
- Completing a strategic plan for the next three years





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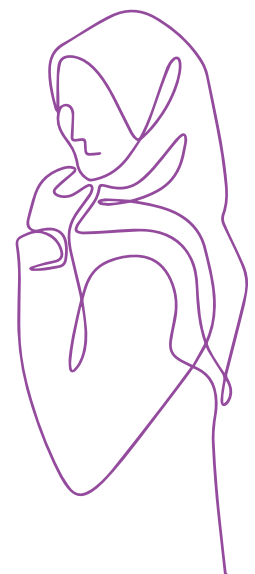
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## Strategic Development and Future Plans

We hope to hold bespoke workshop led by Anna Clarke from Equation to bring together staff and management committee members to develop a shared understanding of the strategies we work to and how we need to adapt and develop to meet the needs of the revised national strategy.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/violence-against-women-and-girls-vawg-call-for-evidence/violence-against-women-and-girls-vawg-strategy-2021-2024-call-for-evidence>

2020 has been a challenging year for most organisations and this has certainly been the case for NMWN. However, we are proud that we have found ways to continue services and have adapted and changed so that Muslim women could access our services and be effectively signposted and referred to the services they needed. The Covid-19 pandemic revealed gaps in services for Muslim women which the Network has successfully addressed. Going forward, we are motivated by opportunities to grow, restructure, develop a new strategic plan and apply for charitable status. Finally, Nottingham Muslim Women's Network is committed to the empowerment of all girls and women in our city and we will be doing more to raise our collective voices and become a greater campaigning voice for the city. In this respect, our work will never be done.





Nottingham  
**Muslim Women's**  
Network

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## Partnership and Networking

Our partnerships have been as vital as ever in continuing our work and building our capacity through the pandemic. We would like to say a huge thank you to all our funders and partners, for working together to help us make it through 2020 and beyond.

### Partners

- Equation
- Heyya women's group
- Himmah
- Family Law Group
- Juno Women's Aid
- Mojatu Foundation
- New Art Exchange
- Nergis Women's Project
- Nottingham City Council
- Nottingham Stands Together
- Nottingham Together
- Nottingham Women's Centre
- NSPCC
- Nur women's group in Sneinton
- Tanveer Moughal (Solicitor)
- Sisters of Noor
- Women's Voices

### Funders

- National lotteries / Awards for All
- Imkaan and Rosa
- Ministry of Justice
- Rosa Small Grants
- Nottinghamshire Police and Crime Commissioner
- Nottingham City Council (Communities of Identity)

