

2023-2024 ANNUAL REPORT





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CHAIR'S REPORT



I am delighted to present our Annual Report for 2023–24.

In the two years since I became Chair, I have seen so much positive change and growth within the organisation.

Forty-three years since first supporting survivors, raising awareness and campaigning for change, there is now, more than ever, a need for specialist led 'by and for' services like AWRC, targeted to support the most vulnerable and marginalised women in our society.

This report demonstrates some of the incredible work achieved. I feel particularly proud of our newly renovated Centre which provides a thriving, safe and pleasant community space for women to receive face to face services and engage in activities, with full disabled access. AWRC is at the forefront in the fight to eliminate harmful practices, leading on three of the largest projects in the UK and launching the first harmful practices training to improve the knowledge and skills of professionals for improved responses.

However, we are also aware of the challenges ahead and the gaps that still need to be addressed to ensure that women receive the support they need. We remain committed to working towards effective and impactful change, in collaboration with our partners both from within the sector and from the broader community.

Our staff have worked tirelessly to help survivors take the first steps into a life free from abuse and I thank each of them for the valuable contribution they make to keeping women safe and empowering them to lead productive lives. I am also grateful to all the Trustees for their commitment and support in steering the organisation through a significant transition during this period.

As we head into this year, I look forward to highlighting the challenges facing the sector, but also to participate in dialogue and implement actions on improvements so that we can work towards the shared goal of eradicating violence against women and girls.

N. Patel

Nithee Patel
(Chair, Board of Trustees)

DIRECTOR'S REPORT



As a by and for led organisation, we have seen that BME women and children who need support are facing even more barriers than before. These include financial barriers to leaving violent relationships due to the cost-of-living crisis; lack of housing and refuge accommodation; high rental costs; increased mental health and suicide ideologies; limited counselling services; supporting women with no recourse to

public funds and barriers to accessing already outstretched services. In the wider environment, failings in police responses to protect women and girls and raising awareness to ensure that society does not tolerate domestic abuse, the need for specialist services has never been greater. AWRC continues to be dedicated to human rights, anti-discrimination, freedom from oppression and ending Violence Against Women and Girls.

Highlights

- AWRC lead on three partnership projects which includes supporting women with no recourse to public funds and two of the largest in addressing harmful practices in the UK.
- Launched London's first dedicated Helpline to support survivors of domestic abuse who have no recourse to public funds.
- Increased the capacity of staff to respond to increased risks and increased demands within the sector number.

- Created the first and only accredited BME sector-led and designed harmful practices Advocates training ringfenced for BME professionals towards capacity building and inclusion of specialist professionals as recognised IDVAs.
- Initiated a one-of-a-kind equitable partnership project with Standing Together Against Domestic Abuse, a white-led second-tier organisation, to foreground BME women's needs and knowledge creation around DA and Harmful practices from an intersectional lens.
- Ensuring provision to support BME families directly who disproportionately experience poverty, including technology poverty.
- Supported staff to access well-being and address vicarious trauma, which is rare in under-resourced specialist organisations.
- Received IRISI funding to deliver specialist GP-based DA services in the London Boroughs of Hammersmith and Fulham, Westminster, Hillingdon, and Harrow in partnership with Advance.
- GLA funding to add specialist Housing roles in response to the DA Act 2021. This includes partnerships with Refuge and Advance.
- AWRC has been at the forefront of strengthening and leading BME-led partnerships and responding to the changing needs of BME women and children.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT



We will continue to offer high quality women centric specialist VAWG services to women and build 'by and for' led partnerships as we have been doing for four decades. We will emphasise the importance of and place at the forefront, the expertise and efficiency of BME led "by and for" organisations that understand and can challenge the myriad of issues faced by the BME women, which are often more complex than simply about community, family or religion.



Our survival does depend on our fundraising efforts and I am extremely grateful to all of the funders who are currently supporting our services.

Sarbjit Ganger
(Director)

ABOUT AWRC

The Asian Women's Resource Centre (AWRC) is a specialist women's organisation based in the London Borough of Brent providing independent, specialist, and dedicated support services to Black, Minority, Ethnic (BME) women and children experiencing abuse across London.

Set up over 43 years ago, the AWRC provides a range of services that offer support around every aspect of women's needs, ensuring a holistic, and needs-led response.

More specifically, services include domestic abuse outreach and advocacy services, working across a spectrum of risks, supporting women to recognise abuse, minimising risks, through safety planning and building women's self-esteem and confidence through group work services; Advice and information services on welfare benefits, homelessness, debt, and immigration, including supporting women who have no recourse to public funds.

Training and employability workshops for women include developing women's knowledge, skills, and experiences to improve their career prospects. Women are also offered social and networking opportunities through activities groups provided by the AWRC.

AWRC is approached by three new women each week fleeing violent relationships, often in crisis situations requiring immediate interventions, and typically advises up to 1,500 women each year. AWRC is the only place where women can seek out specialist services. Practical and same language services are offered in 23 community languages as well as providing options on rights and entitlements, prioritising safety, so that women can make informed choices about their lives and those of their children.

AWRC also provides training to frontline practitioners both from the voluntary and statutory sectors on issues which affect BME women, such as self-harm and suicide, forced marriages, so called 'honour'-based abuse, trafficking, and caste and dowry. The training sessions allow professionals to be more responsive to the needs of BME women and girls in a timely manner.

In addition, we also seek to highlight the needs of BME communities and ensure that their voices influence policy and legislative changes. AWRC provides an open-door policy to all women in need.



OUR AIMS



Work towards Ending Violence Against Women and Girls.



Ensuring safety, security and dignity – offering prompt targeted responses and reducing risks.



Ensure that the needs of BME women are addressed in line with the ethos of led 'by and for'.



Independence and autonomy for BME women.



Securing equality for women across all walks of life.



Involve service users at all levels to ensure that the services provided meet the needs of women.



Commitment to equality and diversity.

AWRC

is a member of the London VAWG consortium and leads the ASCENT Ending Harmful Practices project.

has obtained the Advice quality standard in the 'General Help' category with casework support.

is registered with the Office for Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC) to provide immigration advice - Level 1.



OUR SERVICES

AWRC delivered services to women through a variety of projects and activities this year.

Prevention and Action Through Community Engagement and Training (P&ACT)

Through the *P&ACT partnership project*, funded by the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC), AWRC provides vital support to survivors in combatting harmful practices. This is the largest 'by and for' led partnership with 12 other 'by and for' led organisations in the UK addressing harmful practices. P&ACT provides one to one advocacy, counselling, community engagement workshops and training to frontline staff on harmful practices, including Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), so called 'Honour'-based abuse, faith-based abuse, corrective rape and widow rituals.

Combatting Homelessness

Leading the *Greater London Authority (GLA) Safe Accommodation Housing Project*, AWRC provides floating support services to improve access to safe accommodation to survivors with NRPF.

AWRC is also part of the partnership project, *London Whole Housing Service Partnership (LWHSP)*, which works to address and enhance the pathways of housing support for women experiencing domestic abuse. The partnership works to remove immediate harm, provide safe, sustainable and borough specific support around housing needs and aid recovery and resettlement of women.





Educating and preventing violence against women and girls

AWRC continues to lead and deliver on the London Councils funded project, *Ascent Ending Harmful Practices project*. The project aims to improve service provision for those affected by sexual and domestic abuse, specifically Female Genital Mutilation, 'so called' honour-based abuse, forced marriage and other harmful practices.

Supporting women experiencing No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF)

AWRC is a delivery partner on the *London Holistic Advocacy Wrap Around Service (LHAWAS)* which supports women with NRPF. The project aims to meet the needs of women with NRPF, who are survivors of domestic and sexual abuse and other forms of gendered abuse, including prostitution, trafficking, and harmful practices, and who have insecure immigration status.

Education and Training

AWRC launched its *Harmful Practice Independent Domestic Abuse Advocate Programme* in March 2024. This is a pioneering initiative developed by AWRC which stands at the forefront of addressing harmful practices within the complex landscape of Violence Against BME Women and Girls (VAWG). Rooted in Black Feminist perspective and intersectional approach, the programme is crafted to equip practitioners with specialised knowledge and skills and strives to carve a unique specialist role for Harmful Practice Advocates within the Black and Minority services in the ending VAWG sector.

AWRC collaborates with Advance for the *IRIS Project*, a programme that offers training, support, and referrals for GP practices. The initiative's goal is to provide health professionals with a deeper insight into domestic abuse and its impact on health, enhance their ability to inquire about and address domestic abuse appropriately, guide them on contacting and referring to domestic abuse specialists, and stress the significance of safeguarding in cases of domestic abuse.

Producing Impactful Research and Influencing Policy Framework

Coaction Hub is a 3-year partnership between AWRC and Standing Together Against Domestic Abuse (STADA). It aims to strengthen the Co-ordinated Community Response (CCR) to improve responses to BME survivors of domestic abuse and harmful practices. The project, by fostering an equitable partnership between a 'by and for' BME-led organisation with a second-tier 'white-led' organisation, provides vital intervention and research into areas such as MARAC and CCR referral and delivery pathways among other areas, and training and influences policy framework. Coaction Hub aims to expand spaces led by and for the global majority of VAWG organizations to speak for themselves and lead research from a decolonising perspective.

Providing Women with Opportunities

AWRC offers intensive advocacy and support to women and girls previously affected by domestic abuse through the Surviving Abuse and Thriving Project. This initiative assesses women's requirements to establish safe spaces for social interaction and guidance, hosts employability workshops, and offers volunteering opportunities to women.

The AWRC Building

Extensive renovation work to the Centre was completed in December 2023, enabled by a Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy grant received from Brent Council.

We are delighted to have a bright and exciting safe space for our service users, staff and the whole community. A new room has been built overlooking the garden in which women and staff can relax, get some respite, and enjoy the surroundings. Our "Healing Garden" project is currently underway, and we are planning a formal re-opening event in October 2024





OUR IMPACT



131

**WOMEN WITH NO
RECOURSE TO PUBLIC
FUNDS SUPPORTED**

116



**WOMEN ENGAGED IN
ACTIVITIES AND
SUPPORT
WORKSHOPS**

124



**WOMEN PROVIDED
WITH ADVICE AND
INFORMATION**



750

TOTAL WOMEN SUPPORTED

128



**WOMEN EXPERIENCING
HARMFUL PRACTICES
SUPPORTED**



400

**PROFESSIONALS TRAINED ON
HARMFUL PRACTICES**

23



**LANGUAGES USED TO
PROVIDE SUPPORT
SERVICES TO WOMEN**

FINANCIAL REPORT 2023-2024



Asian Women's Resource Centre

(Registration number: 01942925)
Balance Sheet as at 31 March 2023

	Note	2023 £	2021 £
Fixed assets			
Tangible assets	12	4,530	6,000
Current assets			
Debtors	13	527,296	557,565
Cash at bank and in hand	14	<u>755,027</u>	<u>254,583</u>
		1,282,323	812,148
Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year	15	<u>(453,343)</u>	<u>(433,384)</u>
Net current assets		<u>828,980</u>	<u>378,764</u>
Net assets		<u>833,510</u>	<u>384,764</u>
Funds of the charity:			
Restricted income funds			
Restricted funds		333,709	142,979
Unrestricted income funds			
Unrestricted funds		<u>499,801</u>	<u>241,785</u>
Total funds	16	<u>833,510</u>	<u>384,764</u>

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the special provisions relating to companies subject to the small companies regime within Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006.

The financial statements on pages 14 to 33 were approved by the trustees, and authorised for issue on 10 October 2023 and signed on their behalf by:

C. Gajrawala

.....
C Gajrawala
Trustee

N. Patel

.....
N Patel
Chair and trustee

ACHIEVEMENTS

‘Conversations with Inspirational Women’ Speaker Series

Forty women attended our ‘Conversations with Inspirational Women’ Speaker Series, launched in partnership with The Company of Entrepreneurs in October 2023. The Series connects successful businesswomen with women supported by AWRC to share stories, inspire, and motivate each other. Emphasising themes of “Building Resilience”, “Leadership” and “Anything is Possible”, speakers Rita Bologna, Veronica Heaven, and Jenny Garrett shared their journeys and strategies for overcoming obstacles through hard work, determination, and focus.



Costume-Making Workshop with Kiln Theatre

AWRC, in collaboration with Kiln Theatre's National Lottery Heritage Funded project, Celebrating Our Stories: The Kilburn High Road Project, organised a Costume Design workshop at our Harlesden Centre. This workshop explored communities' heritage, histories, and stories, encouraging women to express themselves creatively through costume making. Participants also received tickets to the musical 'Two Strangers (Carry a Cake Across New York)' and enjoyed backstage access, which they described as 'eye-opening' and 'magical,' comparing it to 'Disneyland.' They credited the SAAT project for providing this unique opportunity.



ACHIEVEMENTS

Creative Arts Project

AWRC, under its SAAT project, worked in partnership with Metroland Cultures on an art project as part of the Brent Biennial exhibition in 2022. Women developed their artistic skills and participated in the creation of high-quality artwork led by an artist experienced in working in the community, some of which are on permanent display in the Centre.

Following the success of this project, two artists were chosen to work on Making The Room Sing, which enabled storytelling through weaving, music, sound, and movement, further unleashing the creative talents of the women and helping to improve their well-being through art. A mentorship program is the final stage of this project.

*“We have witnessed the **powerful and transformative effects that participatory art can have collaborating with AWRC.** The mentorship program will enable women to conduct their own creative healing sessions for others who are at the beginning of their journey.”* – Amanda Camenisch and Thérèse Westin, artists

*“**AWRC helped me to find myself again.** Through the art classes, I was able to paint and create again. I found the motivation to rebuild a new life when I was broken and had nowhere to go. I now have somewhere to stay, know what I want to do and am positive that my future is brighter. **You taught me how to stand up for myself.**”*

M* is a woman supported by AWRC due to her experiencing domestic abuse.

Her case worker encouraged her to attend the arts and wellbeing sessions held at the Centre by Metroland Cultures. She attended them all as well as the subsequent projects, demonstrating a high level of talent. As a result, she was invited to take part in an exhibition in collaboration with the Great West Gallery where she was able to hone her skills and build her experience.



Maya* was referred via the IRIS project to her domestic abuse Advocate Educator (AE) after a visit to her GP who identified her at a high risk of harm having experienced significant emotional and financial abuse, cohesive control, and threats to kill from her partner.

A range of practical and emotional support was given with options presented, including legal access, safety planning, accommodation. Her case was referred to the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) which along with her local Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA) Service monitored further interventions to ensure her safety.

Maya felt more confident to contact the police for support in the future. Her well-being was enhanced due to the prompt action of her GP and she felt more empowered to navigate through her situation with the resources and support options presented to her by the specialist service of the AE. She continues to receive assistance and is in a position to think about longer-term opportunities.

“I’m so pleased that my GP referred me to the IRIS project and I am very happy with the service I received.”

*“Your support and guidance **helped me** find a refuge space and advanced my case for permanent housing.”*

Ms B* is a 30-year-old woman who has experienced physical, emotional, and “honour” based abuse over several years by her parents and siblings. The local children’s safeguarding team and the police were aware of her situation.

Due to AWRC’s expertise in dealing with harmful practices, her case was referred to a specialist case worker. She disclosed her plans to marry a long-term partner which the family was not aware of. Her case was escalated as high risk to the MARAC and referred to the Adult Safeguarding team. An application for a refuge space was completed as well as for urgent housing support. Due to the possibility of a forced marriage taking place, the police were kept informed and an extensive safety plan was implemented.

Ms B suffered severe trauma because of her circumstances. With AWRC’s support, she was allocated a housing officer and the police provided welfare checks.

HERstory

“I never thought anyone would believe my mother was my abuser. *I can rebuild my life now that I am safe* and see that I can have a good future.”

Lisa* is a 24-year-old woman who experienced sexual and emotional abuse and coercive control from the age of 8 by her mother which continued into adulthood. The home was used for prostitution with strangers constantly making inappropriate advances.

After she disclosed the abuse at the age of 23 to a counsellor, the police were notified and she was referred to AWRC. Initially, Lisa did not reveal her mother was her abuser as she was still living with her, putting her at considerable and ongoing risk. Her case worker identified housing as the primary need, securing her a refuge space and signposting her to an Independent Sexual Violence Advocate (ISVA) who subsequently referred her for sexual trauma counselling.

Lisa was able to begin a life free of abuse and applied to do a Master's degree as well as enrolled on a musical talent development programme through her church.

3

Aysha* was a 17-year-old living in Dubai when she was forced to marry a 47-year-old man from her extended family. They moved to the UK where she experienced severe emotional, verbal, and financial abuse by her husband. Despite having 2 children, she received little financial support and felt totally isolated.

She finally escaped to a refuge but due to fear of losing her children if she reported the abuse, he still had contact with them. After he reported her for breaching refuge rules, she lost her place, ending up homeless with the prospect of permanently losing custody of the children if she was unable to secure housing. Her social worker was unable to secure accommodation and referred her to AWRC.

4

Her case worker advocated on her behalf, liaising with a solicitor regarding court proceedings. She was enrolled in the Freedom Programme and participated in other activities where she met women with similar experiences, and received counselling to reduce her anxiety and depression.

AWRC helped Aysha secure temporary accommodation. She felt more confident in expressing her own needs and those of her children. She continues to appeal to the family court to gain custody of her children and is working towards getting a divorce. Aysha is more financially secure since gaining employment in administration.

“AWRC gave me hope. You never stopped contacting me to offer support, for which I am so grateful.”

TRUSTEES

Nithee Patel (Chair)
Ruby Sayed (Vice Chair)
Tina Siddiqui (Treasurer)
Anusha Pache
Chandrika Gajrawala
Rita Bologna
Tajinder Nijjar

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GMSP
— GOD MY SILENT PARTNER —
FOUNDATION


Brent

IRISi
interventions



“I feel *so lucky to have found you*. You are the best thing that ever happened to me and my children.”

“You *informed me of my options* and helped me to understand the routes I could take.”

“I felt lost until I found this service. Then I found my way and my *confidence and resilience* grew stronger. You gave me the *courage* to help others.”



AWRC
108 Craven Park, Harlesden
London, NW10 8QE
Tel: 020 8961 6549
Tel: 020 8961 5701
Email: info@awrc.org.uk
Email: referrals@awrc.org.uk