

Newham Asian Women's Project

**Annual Report
2015**

E M P O W E R M E N T

**Women Hold Up Half the Sky
Girls Shake the Ground beneath our Feet**

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Foreword by the Management Committee

The Management Committee of Newham Asian Women's Project (NAWP) is proud to present its Annual Report 2015. Over the past year we have experienced significant growth and development of our project. While it is difficult to capture all of the activity that has taken place, we highlight the five most significant developments in this report which illustrate our approach to empowerment.

Over the last 5 years we had begun to implement a strategy on diversifying our client base to include all BMER women and girls. The decision to move from single group provision to a BMER service was complex. We did not want to change our focus because of an economic imperative but rather because there was a social justice need. After more than two decades of work with South Asian women we developed our expertise and specialism. Following analysis of casework we were able to identify approaches to the work that could be delivered to a wider group of women and girls under the VAWG framework. In 2014 we fully diversified our refuge service to include all BMER women. We also created bedspaces for disabled women suffering domestic violence and created emergency provision for women with NRPF or insecure immigration status. We agreed that at a time when services were being cut with certain groups of women affected more adversely, that we would act to safeguard and expand protection through service development.

There has been significant emphasis by governments on evidence-based practice and policy. Often services like NAWP are consulted to submit information for use in studies conducted by institutions where we have no authorship and our link to the material is severed, leaving very little scope for interpretation through analysis, or inclusion of diverse perspectives. However when we attempt to use the same information to construct our evidence-base we are told that our systems are not methodologically robust. Recently, the parameters of what is considered 'the evidence-base' has been even more narrowly defined to mean replication of universal support leaving little space for diversity of experience and viewpoint, or inclusion of specialist perspectives developed from the delivery of complex casework on domestic and sexual violence. In other words, the evidence-base has implied 'fitting the mould' which any black feminist will say is simply not possible, foreseeable, practical or justifiable. As a woman's organisation we decided many years ago to develop our evidence-base combining qualitative approaches to the documentation of women's narratives with more conventional approaches of evidence on take-up and outcome. NAWP's approach is captured in NAWP's case study library and it is an element of the work that will grow in years to come. Black women documenting their lives is a powerful and empowering voice offering social criticism.

Quality assurance is an evidence-based measure. NAWP achieved Women's Aid Quality Mark and Advice Quality Standard from the Legal Services Commission since the last annual report. External quality marks help us to promote our work as excellent in the field and gives us a framework for accountability to women and girls who use NAWP's services.

The way we deliver services has always been dynamic. There has always been a drive to achieve beyond in order to meet the vision of organisation to eradicate violence.

NAWP has created specialist dedicated services which are designed to challenge the normalisation, acceptance and tolerance of violence in society through early intervention and prevention and effective support provision. The services developed under this framework bring together an intersectional gendered approach for social change. This means that there is a shift in the power balance from service provider to service user where narrative constructions of women and girls are used to design, change and influence service and the policies attached to them.



We have been looking at the concept of 'specialism' and 'specialist', relating such terms as they once did to intersectionality, culturally specific and language diversity, and re-defining what it all means in relation to gender, violence, representation and sustainability. The sector today recognises all women's services as 'specialist', defining the work out with intersectionality. The definition of domestic violence is implemented in dissecting ways for example, harmful practice is applied as violence imbedded in culture but not patriarchy. Domestic violence, as a concept, it partitioned when considered in reference to specific groups of people. The term itself is hijacked to meet more imperialist geo-political priorities of neo-conservative world order. NAWP has returned to the grassroots, gone back to the evidence in casework documentation, and listened to the voice of women and girls. We are a specialist service identified as black feminist (founded on gender, race and class intersections) and from this perspective, we advocate social change. We view gender violence as rationalised in patriarchy, the only global culture justifying violence against women and girls. It is important because it helps to ground the work and the oppressions we challenge in the need for political transformation and social justice.

Management Committee
Newham Asian Women's Project
November 2014

Meera Syal

Patron, Newham Asian Women's Project



I have been the patron at Newham Asian Women's Project for many years and I have had first-hand experience of the change that women and children experience after they have fled violence to the safety of NAWP's refuges. I have seen how they have empowered themselves and moved on with their lives. While this year the theme of the report is empowerment, in all the years that I have represented NAWP empowerment has been critical to the work done

with women and girls. NAWP has never underestimated the power of voice and has never been swayed by dramatic shifts in policy that have failed women and girls. NAWP has always considered that there is a way to get things done that represent and reflect the views, desires and expectations of women and girls. NAWP has a clear understanding that with empowerment there is the possibility of change from within, of individuals and for organisation, and sometimes this can mean falling outside the status quo challenging the way things are done. NAWP will continue to hold up and shake grounds beneath.

Meera Syal
Patron, Newham Asian Women's Project

EMPOWERMENT

Women Hold up Half the Sky, Girls Shake the Ground beneath our Feet

Empowerment is autonomy and self-determination, or the point at which a woman feels that she is gaining in these states of being. The feeling of empowerment supports women to participate fully in social, economic and political life, to achieve and thrive in these realms that may not have been accessible before a woman is empowered. Empowerment is a sustaining force leading to a better life.

While the concept and process of empowerment can be individually experienced, black feminism reminds us that it is a collective experience,

FOR WOMEN, BY WOMEN.

Empowerment is the movement towards the realisation of shared interests grounded in non-discrimination, justice and equality.

Newham Asian Women's Project started the Women's Panel for service users 3 years ago. The purpose was to give women and girls a voice in service delivery and to use feedback from them to shape the design and delivery of services. This was called co-production. However it did not go far enough. The panels became self-defined entities where women and girls who had accessed services from NAWP came together to share experiences, to talk about survival from violence, and to exchange information as a form of women's community-based exchange and networking.

Governance took the form of many discussions and expressed narratives. Sometimes it was about communicating to NAWP about what was not working well and how to improve it while at other times, it was about how we grow and develop our collective voice around non-violence activism, protest and peace. Collective voice was expressed in many ways – informing housing services of the need for a new approach because the existing one was not open to or reflective of the experiences of women fleeing domestic violence, sharing ideas about how to approach elected members for better representation on gender issues and signing up to zero tolerance as an electoral pledge, and the forward plan of the management committee ensuring a tight connection between strategy and the lives of women and girls.

Governance for this group of black women was about representation of voice with diverse views reflected in the actions of organisation. In this way governance was a unique expression of black women's agency evolved in the Women's Panel.

The history of the Women's Panel is fluid and dynamic. It involved a group of women waiting for a legal advisor in the reception area at NAWP's main office. They began a dialogue that started with the reasons why they were at NAWP. The reason became reference point for the discussion – a convergence of women with common experience joining ideas.

One afternoon the discussion changed to housing – the need for, the lack of and the desire to move for a better life. As one woman told another woman about the street she lived on a third woman had transformed the discussion about how the three might join resources to afford housing of their own. Another afternoon a group of women began to talk about the pressure on the household budget and the need for clothing for their children.

A resourcing network suddenly emerged. The network would take many forms over the weeks to come. There was no agenda or structure to the afternoon meetings. The need for free legal advice to address specific situations of domestic violence brought them together but what they created was social capital – the exchange of information and networking sources – building social resources.

Women came together in the house-like structure of the central office at NAWP. They had a cup of tea and biscuits. They introduced themselves mindful of confidentiality.

They grew their social capital through dialogue and voice, exchanging information, networking and collaborating with each other. Women's agency and the empowerment it possesses was on display.

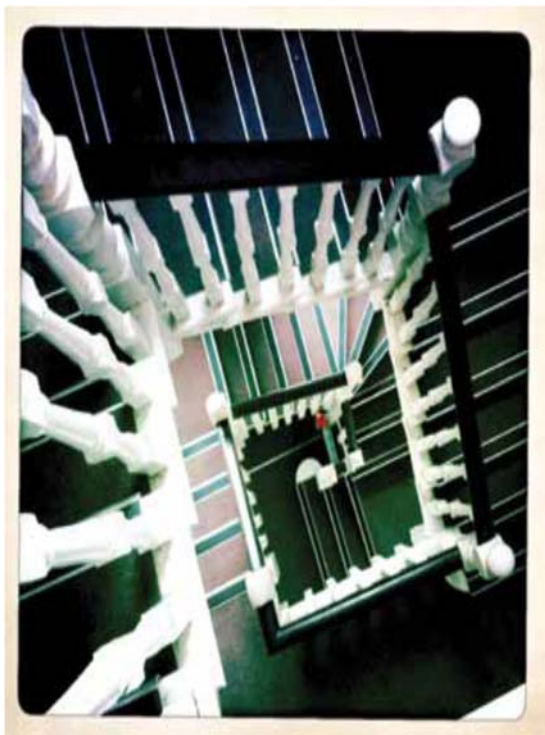
When the Women's Panel began to meet regularly over lunch time the topics reflected the need for political activism and organisation. They discussed economic violence and exploitation, unfair treatment by courts which failed to hold violent men accountable for financial support for their children, conditions of poverty that affected their lives and limited their choices including treatment for poor health and mental health breakdown, the lack of control when they confronted social services and housing for support and the racism they experienced resulting from increased Police surveillance and the criminalisation of their communities and of their lives as women. The Women's Panel provided safe space for such discussion and then as always, following the sharing of experience, they discussed ways to fix the 'terrible social ills'.

Women hold up the sky, girls shake the ground

Young women who attended the panels mostly listened. The space was not appropriate for them to share with age acting as a barrier but they felt it was a good learning opportunity, remaining behind after the panels to create their own space in an ad hoc way. They talked about the need for more services in schools. Sexual harassment was a major concern as they expressed how 'normal' such forms of abuse and harassment towards them were. All young women speaking in their own space talked about a direct experience of sexual harassment and knowing friends and female relatives who had been victims of sexual abuse and rape.

There was scope to imagine as well. The idea about peace and non-violence in everyday human relationship, in the words spoken and shared, in deeds performed and exchanged was possible. The discussions that followed suggested **the possibility of transforming the system of social and economic exchange and to move towards intolerance and abhorrence of violence. The panel was an exercise in empowerment, evidence of critical and collective voice of women and girls.**

So that's what NAWP had to do, transform the system of exchange and safeguard social justice. We took those views seriously and began to conceptualise an approach to the work which we called community advocacy – **the organic movement of women from the grassroots growing their knowledge through interface with NAWP and using their agency in ways to promote empowerment.**



The initial experiences of community based advocacy evidenced hidden need of women who faced isolation from services and had very little recourse to action. The condition of isolation created further vulnerability however it did not create voicelessness. Such women were referred to by some as 'hard to reach' but the community advocates found them very easily and in the process discovered that it was the lack of opportunity that created isolation. Through information and awareness raising the community advocates achieved empowerment, breaking down the cycle of isolation in order to address violence, working with the women to consolidate their networking tools and safe community-based resources, and creating pathways to NAWP and beyond.

Refuge Service – Providing Safe Space

For 28 years NAWP has provided emergency accommodation to women and children in need of safety and security from domestic violence. There have been a number of critical changes to the service delivered by NAWP.

Over the past few years NAWP has diversified the client group to include all BME women and children. The change in client group has also shifted the staffing structure to reflect changing needs and significant investment has been made to the staff training and development programme in order to upskill staff around diverse needs and experiences of domestic violence.

NAWP has expanded its provision in Newham by doubling bedspace capacity and has retained refuges in Harginey.

NAWP developed a counselling and therapeutic support service for women and children in the refuges in order to maximise support provision and meet critical need for recovery from trauma.

The holistic approach based on keyworking, counselling and therapy, and resettlement support has provided women and children with intensive person-centred support. Through these developments NAWP has taken a progressive approach to addressing the needs of women and children fleeing domestic violence.



Nonetheless there have been a number of challenges faced by the organisation due to changes in strategy and commissioning structures for accommodation-based domestic violence services.

Under new Supporting People targets, resettlement occurs within 9 months. This represents a number of challenges for both women and the service. There is an assumption by commissioning that when a woman flees domestic violence that her risk level reduces from high to medium because she is in safe space. Findings from NAWP's casework suggest that a number of intersecting factors cause risk levels to shift and fluctuate for women and children over the



course of their stay in a refuge. For example, in the majority of cases the first three months of a woman's stay in a refuge are considered vulnerable to risk because it is a period of time when the perpetrator actively seeks her whereabouts. In some cases, women have very high safety needs, limited mobility and struggle with the effects of trauma from abuse requiring intensive casework support for multiple and complex need.

Where a woman has a child she faces vulnerability due to child contact arrangements which can pose additional risks to her and her children. Children's safeguarding needs can escalate after child contact arrangement are made and during the contact itself.

Independent housing at a time of a contracted affordable housing market presents additional pressure for women in the last 3 months of her 9 month stay in a refuge causing risk to escalate resulting in high emotional and mental health needs including depression and suicidal ideation. **Where move-on is made to insecure, inappropriate and unaffordable housing then there is further risk of repeat victimisation, return to perpetrator and domestic violence homicide.**

Without refuge expansion it would be impossible to support women with NRPF or insecure migration status because of economic pressures placed on existing provision.

Refuges are at a turning point in this country. The state funding model is one that is studied by countries as a way to secure safety for women and provide options for their journey out of violence especially for those women with limited financial and economic means. Over the past few years the state funding model has been decimated with cuts forcing providers to think differently about intensive support provision to women and children fleeing domestic violence. **The most vulnerable women – women with insecure immigration status – are disappeared from the system of provision which is driven economically.**

Policy has a way of being viewed myopically and outside of a social justice approach. While the evidence-base of community-based actions is under scrutiny because it is located externally, as other, viewed as difficult to systematise, categorise and model

as efficiency and transferability, refuge services are forced by such circumstance to think creatively and constructively about meeting women's needs as failing to do so will result in dire consequences for women.

NAWP accommodated 110 women and 48 children in 2014-2015.

100 women were resettled over the same period with most moving on the private let or council housing.

86% of the women said that they felt empowered by the support they received.

Key Achievements

96% said the service had a positive impact on their emotional and mental health enabling them to move on with their lives.

92% said they felt better after having fled domestic violence and being supported by the project to move on to independent living.

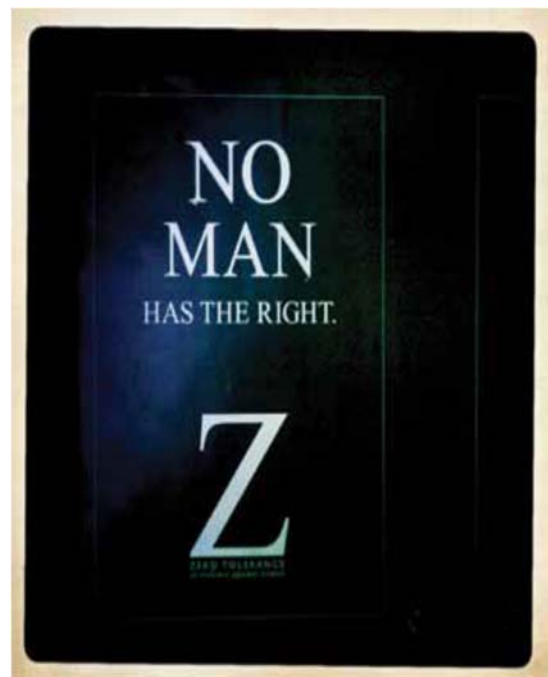
Future Plans

NAWP's refuge services have expanded. Over the next 12 months the service will be consolidated by focusing on three key actions: improved support to women with insecure immigration status, increased pathways for women with disability fleeing domestic violence, and introduction of a resettlement and independent living strategy to support women to move on from refuge life to safe housing of their own.

Advice Service – Protecting Women’s Rights

In November 2015 NAWP launched the new Legal Advice Service for black minority ethnic women and girls in East London and Haringey. The new service builds from the work of previous years where the foundation for rights-based advice, information and community education around issues such as domestic violence, housing, immigration and welfare was laid. **The new service introduces a community advocacy project which involves women in the community volunteering as local human rights advocates working at ground level facilitating women’s access to services and raising awareness of domestic violence and the legal rights-based framework.**

From interviews with BMER women discussing their experiences, if any, of privatised legal processes and intersecting cultural factors it was found that a quarter of women were uncertain about their rights under UK law stating that barriers to access including lack of information and financial means as key concerns. A proportion of women interviewed had accessed Sharia Courts for marriage dissolution on religious grounds but were unaware of the legal validity of such proceedings. They stated that their reason for access to privatised legal processes was the lack of legal recourse available to them in British law. They believed that treatment would be equal regardless of the legal system they used.



The community advocacy project is a part of an ongoing community education and awareness-raising initiative to ensure that women make informed choices when they interface with legal systems and that such choices are not affected by the lack of access to legal remedies found in British law.

The research from interviews found that in high risk domestic violence cases involving children, women were concerned about protections offered by privatised legal processes but felt that their choices were limited because communities considered them legitimate. Women identified community advocacy as a facilitator of change for women. Cultural issues and notions of family and community honour intersected to affect women’s decisions about the cultural legitimacy of privatised legal processes hence, Sharia divorce carried cultural legitimacy which could outweigh the need for a divorce through British courts. Family and community pressure bore heavily on women’s decisions to use privatised legal processes. NAWP’s findings are supported by other research suggesting that privatised courts act against women leaving violent relationships, leaving them disempowered and re-victimised.

The new service galvanises women to speak out and challenge instances such as privatised legal processes through knowledge-based action in order to enhance protection for women and children in cases of domestic violence.

Knowledge-based action is not confined to challenging privatised legal process in isolation but includes the entire legal arena, whether private or statutory, of law and the rights and protections they offer, or fail to provide, for women and children.

Just under 1,000 women accessed NAWP for legal advice.

84% of women had accessed another service before approaching NAWP for legal advice. BMER women access services 12 to 17 times before receiving a positive response from the right agency relating to their situation of domestic violence.

Key Achievements (of the previous service)

66% of women suffered domestic violence for more than 24 months exhausting all other remedies (family and community support, social networks and other agencies) before accessing NAWP.

8% of women had no recourse to public funds (NRPF) and 21% had an immigration issue. These issues acted as barriers to support especially in cases of NRPF where women were turned away from the majority of agencies they approached before they accessed NAWP.

Future Plans

As stated in the introductory paragraph, a new Advice service is launched which will have more direct interface with the community creating pathways for those women who face deep isolation and the associating vulnerability. The new service will develop the community advocacy model based on women's agency and will introduce a new Advice service training provision to professionals across the legal and statutory sectors on specialist domestic violence casework contained at NAWP. In addition to these strands of advice work, outreach drop-in surgeries will continue focusing on specialist areas of women and housing.

Zindaagi – Project Life

Project Life 'Zindaagi' is ground breaking, avant-garde and liberating. Project Life offers support services to young women and girls from black minority ethnic and refugee backgrounds. Project Life provides early intervention and prevention services and therapeutic support.

The aim is to work with young women and girls in youth-led space using empowerment approaches. The service is developed and delivered through co-ordinated programmes to support young women and girls, providing guidance to enable them to make informed choices, raising awareness around the impact of violence, building confidence and self-esteem, and by providing a range of opportunities through support networks.

Leadership, support and facilitation are core concepts in the work delivered. These are achieved through the empowerment of young women and girls by developing qualities through awareness raising and aspirational leadership.

“...they said my experiences of sexual violence were so severe that I could only have been making it up...”

In 2011 a specialist dedicated project was launched to provide counselling and therapeutic support to young women and girls at risk of or suffering domestic and sexual violence. Through this project approaches to counselling for young women and girls were developed which considered how dual stigma around mental health wellbeing and domestic and sexual violence impacted young women and girls. **The project also helped to breakdown barriers for young women and girls who were most often misunderstood by services, labelled as 'difficult' or 'problematic' and generally not believed when they spoke about the violence they experienced.**

In 2014 another specialist dedicated project was developed providing intensive support work to young women and girls and **directly challenging concepts of normalisation, tolerance and acceptance of violence and abuse.** This project considered how such concepts created violent cultures in society resulting in abuse minimisation as experienced by women and girls and silencing of victims/survivors. By delivering directed support and group work the project has been able to sensitise young women and girls to violence and its effects, and deconstruct mainstreamed notions as well as popular imagery which continue to oppress and control the behaviour and image of women and girls more broadly.

In 2015 the third element of specialist dedicated work was developed addressing forced marriage as a form of domestic violence, working across the age groups of women affected or at risk and creating pathways to support. Critical to the work around forced marriage is awareness raising as it is often viewed as a form of harmful practice imbedded in cultural and ethnic identity different from the 'predominant' or 'mainstream' identity. Rather, the project frames the work in domestic violence applying discourse on patriarchy as the critical theoretical approach to the work. The reason for clarity in design and approach is that **framing abuse and violence in terms of**

'harmful practices' practices proves to narrow the perspective and diminish the voice of victims/survivors. This is done through othering of the victim/survivor.



The three elements of Project Life as described above create space for women and girls to articulate their experience of gender violence creating a conceptual framework that challenges patriarchy, practical tools that address abuse minimisation and silencing, and creative expression for awareness. This work led to the creation of an arts' based project utilising young women's voices in artistic expression constructing their own narratives around empowerment as markers of strength, identity and imagination.

Women hold up half the sky but girls shake the ground beneath our feet.

Project Life also houses the adult counselling service which prioritises BMER women living in Newham who suffer domestic violence, self-harm and/or are at risk of suicide, and to women residing in NAWP's refuges. The client group may include those who may or may not have a psychiatric history, sufferers of psychosomatic illness, anxiety, stress, depression, loneliness among other issues. The service is offered completely independent of any other professionals involved with the client/user thus, intending to ensure that the service operates with a Confidentiality Policy, and is perceived as such by the user group. A new element included in the work is support groups to adult women focusing on life skills, building self-confidence and self-esteem and peer support.

227 young women and girls from age 8 to 21 supported through 121 counselling, advocacy and other forms of individualised support.

100 women aged 18+ were supported through 121 counselling in the adult counselling service.

Key Achievements (of the previous service)

650 young women and girls accessing support groups, schools based workshops covering themes on gender violence, and other forms of group work.

75% of young women and girls saying they have better awareness of violence and abuse and how it affects their lives.

92% of young women and girls saying their level of confidence and self-esteem has improved as a result of having accessed Project Life.

90% of young women and girls saying they now make informed decisions for their lives and feel a sense of control.

Future Plans

Project Life will continue to develop the work around specialist dedicated support to young women and girls in the areas highlighted above.

Project Life will grow its approach to challenging the normalisation, acceptance and tolerance of violence through its service delivery and awareness raising work.

Project Life will grow the evidence base and the case study library demonstrating effective support and therapeutic approaches to addressing gender violence and intersecting issues of race and class and systematic discrimination and oppression faced by young women and girls.

Newham Asian Women's Project
Statement of financial activities (incorporating an income and expenditure account)

For the year ended 31 March 2014

	Restricted	Unrestricted	2014	2013
	£	£	Total	Total
Incoming resources			£	£
Incoming resources from generated funds				
Voluntary income	-	67,262	67,262	3,576
Investment income	-	187	187	211
Incoming resources from charitable activities				
Safe accommodation and housing support	10,000	485,354	495,354	585,879
Legal advice	97,429	-	97,429	97,029
Mental health services	39,125	102,000	141,125	130,792
Paul Hamlyn	6,271	-	6,271	4,500
Foundation - Right Here Bid				
TEENS (early intervention & prevention)	9,792	-	9,792	13,708
Total incoming resources	162,617	654,804	817,420	835,695
Resources expended				
Cost of generating funds				
Fundraising and publicity	-	4,768	4,768	20,921
Charitable activities				
Safe accommodation and housing support	10,000	543,389	553,389	542,998
Legal advice	99,209	-	99,209	101,616
Mental health services	41,231	104,461	145,692	162,948
Paul Hamlyn	5,759	-	5,759	10,395
Foundation - Right Here Bid				
Residents Welfare Fund	500	-	500	-
TEENS (early intervention & prevention)	7,257	-	7,257	15,710
Governance costs	-	20,823	20,823	20,236
Total resources expended	163,957	673,442	837,399	874,825
Net (outgoing)/incoming resources before transfers	(1,340)	(18,638)	(19,978)	(39,129)
Transfers between funds	1,780	(1,780)	-	-
Net movement in funds	440	(20,419)	(19,978)	(39,129)
Funds brought forward	31,960	273,252	305,212	344,341
Funds carried forward	32,401	252,833	285,234	305,212

All of the above results are derived from continuing activities. There were no other recognised gains or losses other than those stated above. Movements in funds are disclosed in note 12 to the financial statements.



Anjum Mouj
 Chair of NAWP

NAWP Staff and Management Team

Management Committee

Chair	Anjum Mouj
Vice Chair	Surriya Ahmad
Treasurer	Rena Pathak
Secretary	Saika Alam
Members	Palvinder Kudhail Prity Patel Bedia

NAWP Staff

Director	Baljit Banga
Senior Management Team	Poppy Banerjee Parmjeet Bhambra Fatima Seedat Kaveri Sharma (resigned 08/15)
Central Services	Shahina Begum Yasmeen Iqbal Riffat Jabeen Pushpa Patel
Advice	Taranjeet Chana Camille Rouse
Refuge	Yodit Abebe Diba Alikani Mina Khanam Farah Mian Pat Omorgerie Shabana Sharif Pavlina Skoutela
Zindaagi	Nadia Baksh Zephyr Devon Husnara Kabir Humna Miah Abilgail Owusu

Newham Asian Women's Project thank all of its funders:

City Bridge Trust

Comic Relief

Department of Communities and Local Government

East London Foundation Trust

Esmee Fairbairn Foundation

Forced Marriage Unit Domestic Programme Fund

London Borough of Haringey

London Borough of Newham

Plaistow South Big Local

Reaching Communities Big Lottery Fund

We thank you for your collaboration and support for our work and for upholding a vision for a world of peace, free from violence and harm.

Newham Asian Women's Project thank all of its friends, volunteers and supporters who have collaborated with us and offered their guidance and support over the years, often when asked to do so over a quick telephone conversation which ends with the words "...don't worry, it's done, call any time you need to..." Together we have worked towards the common goal of ending violence against women and girls, laying the foundation over many journeys travelled together across space and time to create a future of safety and freedom.



Working for Women, Working against Violence

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