

# AFRICAN WOMEN'S HEALTH GROUP ANNUAL REPORT 2020-21

## Background

Set up and led by women from hard-to-reach communities who have clubbed together to offer health advice, advocacy and interpreting support, signposting and information, African Women's Health Group (AWHG) is a constituted voluntary sector charity and unincorporated association which works in the deprived ward of Darnell in Sheffield. It is also governed by an annually elected voluntary Management Committee team composed of local women who themselves have faced challenges in finding their way through life.

We support isolated and disadvantaged women – particularly those of *Black and Ethnic Minority* heritage, refugees and asylum-seekers - in accessing much-needed health advice, advocacy, training and services and aim to:

- Reduce isolation, stigma towards single parenthood and discrimination by helping affected women strengthen social networks and confidence to become better integrated and active into their locality;
- Reach out, empower and equip disadvantaged women with advocacy, awareness and interpreting support, health, legal and practical tools to make informed decisions and take action;
- Address high levels of unemployment by providing basic skills, literacy, vocational training, childcare and homework support for a further generation of young people enabling isolated women and families who might be living in poverty with skills to achieve their full social, emotional, civic and employment potential.

## Working Together

A majority of AWHG's service-users are unemployed or from low-income households in a district experiencing some of Britain's highest indices of deprivation. Most are from migrant or refugee communities and of Pakistani, Yemeni, Somali, Bangladeshi, Sudanese, Syrian and Ethiopian heritage and come with below age-related educational expectations in education.

Most hear of our services by word-of-mouth. As all of us come from a position of shared experiences, we understand and support one another while each newcomer can see how other women have

developed new skills and moved forward in life. In this sense, we provide ideal role models through our collective efforts.

Classes, workshops, craft activities and preparations for celebrations and outings help build confidence and bond women and young people together while establishing networks to which they can turn at times of alienation, potential bullying and disenfranchisement which can lead to negative outlooks on life and poor self esteem.

While coming to learn and gain skills, women also say that it gives them a chance to get out of home, learn how to go about improving their own lives and above all, to enjoy themselves in the process!

Better peer networks also make the experience more sociable as learners meeting others in similar circumstances helps break down taboos of shame as learners start to rebuild new lives. Our welcoming venue offers refreshments which women can help themselves as they please while meeting others in a safe space where they feel can come for help.

## **Staff**

AWHG's *4-days-a-week Project Manager* and a part-time English, Arabic and Somali-speaking *3-days-a-week Outreach Advocate* who supports and helps advocate for isolated women, refugees and families while providing logistical support for family activities including our *Home Work Club* advocates for women have been supported since 2017 by Big Lottery's *Reaching Communities* programme. Both are DBS-checked and *Safeguarding, Health & Safety* and *First Aid* trained as are core Trustees and volunteers.

## **Management Committee Team**

As we are a self-help group, our Management Committee is made up of local women, some of who first came to our centre as service-users and volunteers who help with advocacy and outings are themselves from the local community.

Thanks to the efforts of our Acting Chairperson, Halima Mohamed, our Secretary, Rima Akhayat, our Treasurer, Amina Warsama and Committee members Fatima Noore, Cudbi Warsama and Ramadath Kaidafra Alkasadir, we managed personal and practical challenges faced over the lockdown period to continue supporting women asking for help.

Halima Mohamed, Amina Warsame and Deequa Ibrahim, first set up AWHG in 1992 to help local women, most of whom were single parents coming out of Somalia as refugees, desperately wanting help with paperwork, interpreting support for doctor, school, benefit and housing appointments. Health problems, family and limited English language skills made it difficult for them to make friends, get

to know what is going on locally and find their way around life in Sheffield.

Partnerships were also formed with local organisations including the *NHS* who visited to facilitate **healthy living workshops** to address health complaints for particularly marginalized local women. But while services were made available for such activities, it is thanks to the core team of *AWHG* members who networked, organized and publicized events, provided advice and advocacy support to a growing stream of women seeking them out for help while managing *Homework Club* tutors and supporting *ESOL* tutors from *Sheffield City College* with recruitment, registration, exam and certification processes.

*AWHG* Management Committee Trustees met quarterly and willingly gave their time to keep the center running. Some voluntary Trustees who had given over 2 decades of their limited time to managing this very community-embedded service wanted to move on as work, health and family issues were beginning to negatively affect their ability to help and while newcomers continue to be invited to join, we were finding it more difficult in recent years to involve newcomers as pressure on unemployed women to undertake rigorous job searches increase while those in work have limited time between family duties and jobs.

Until this time, *AWHG* had never sought more than small grants to cover the overhead costs for their activities but Management Committee Trustees decided it was time to explore funding to create a post for a part-time Advocacy Worker who could offer advice with support from interpreters and volunteers as well as a part-time Coordinator to make sure services could run if volunteers were unable to attend.

Thanks to help from the *Big Lottery*, three-years funding was made available to fund these posts, cover some of the organizational overheads and to build capacity of volunteers, staff and Trustees in the team from October 2017. Volunteer Trustees were encouraged to apply as they knew the working of the organisation and had personal experience and networks amongst particularly marginalized women with whom we work.

The good work of *AWHG* continues to be recognized and services are running smoothly so while the question of Trustee recruitment has been revisited several times, particularly as several Trustees, one with growing work and commitments and two with personal or family health issues had talked of resigning but had been persuaded to continue when the team struggled to identify newcomers from within its grassroots neighbourhood to join at *AWHG's* 2018 AGM.

But when several members finally made their long awaited moves to resign at *AWHG's* June 2019 AGM, coupled with discussions held in preparation for a quality assurance review, it became clear that *AWHG* needs to re-double efforts to encourage new recruits from amongst students formerly attending their Homework Club who have the skills and confidence to learn to help manage this very grassroots charity, as well as women coming for services or to support our range of activities.

## Volunteers

Outreach, registration, learners assessments, signposting and advocacy support are facilitated by AWHG's own staff and volunteer interpreters including five of Syrian, Somali, Kurdish and Pakistani heritage who speak community languages including Somali, Arabic, Urdu - and even Swedish and Dutch!

Ten volunteers have helped our *Advocacy Worker* this year with giving advice and, when necessary, accompanying women to appointments and helping as interpreters. Volunteers also take class registers, photocopy learning materials and preparing refreshments for break times. Some even help as teaching assistants when individuals in large classes need a bit of extra help! We couldn't ask for a more committed, skilled and enthusiastic team than our volunteers who are listed below:

Some become volunteers and help with our crèche which looks after the children of women coming to our center while others go to local nurseries where they undertake placements once a week. In this sense, our services helps women take small but important steps to gain skills, confidence and experience to lead informed, independent and fulfilling lives. Each, in turn, becomes a role model for peers and neighbours searching for confidence to take first steps out of home.

Adults achieving qualifications and young people, for instance, who have attended our Homework Club and managed to go onto university often come back to support us as volunteers and trainee teachers. In turn, they also serve as a role models and peer advisors for others who's parents might have limited educational experiences and are at a loss as to how to positively intervene when young people feel like failures and become depressed, distressed and don't know what to do to improve life prospects.

By offering hope, social networks and support from peers role models and advisors, we hope to build confidence, resilience and positive motivation amongst hard-to-reach women and a generation of disadvantaged young people who share survival skills on how to manage at times of financial precarity and when feeling bleak about the future. It allows us all to dare to dream and achieve our personal, professional and civic aspirations!

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## Partnerships

Given the closure of normal ESOL and Childcare classes normally provided by tutors from *Sheffield College* and childcare tutors sent by *Sheffield City Council's Skills for Life* team, lockdown meant we were forced to put childcare courses on hold while we worked closely with *Sheffield College's* ESOL tutor as we helped women from households with Smartphones and laptops to remotely access ESOL classes via a WhatsApp group created. While some women turned to their teens and children for digital advice, others were painstakingly supported by our staff and volunteers who talked them through each process.

Somali restaurant

Corrie

*Childcare*) Entry Level 1 training over the course of each academic year for 12 women each term in partnership with *Red Tape*, *Sheffield Council's Skills for Life* tutor Helen Haythorne. *Darnell Community Nursery* also provide work experience placements for AWHG trainees.

Now that I've spoken with Voluntary Action Sheffield I'm beginning to be invited to join hubs and attend meetings which means we are now getting recognition that we never had before...

Finding employment. We also receive referrals to our weekend Homework Club from local secondary schools and are supported with advice and signposting to funding opportunities by *Voluntary Action Sheffield*.

## Supporting South Yorkshire Community Foundation

SYCF has helped AWHG for some 20 years, coming down when we were first learning to apply for grants and showing a great deal of understanding. We felt we could share our insights and learning as a group supporting minority ethnic women whose voices are not always heard in wider forums. We wanted to help them in return, so when SYCF first asked whether Halima Mohamed, our Chair, might

be willing to join their grants panel and help reflect those wider voices, we were nervous about the responsibility but quickly agreed.

I have gained a range of skills from training offered and from learning for peers making decisions about applications; I've also learnt a huge amount from reading about what different organisations are doing and now know about organisations that I didn't know existed before. It's useful for signposting women coming to us for services and I've learnt about different ideas of how different organisations deliver services. It has also allowed me to offer input from a BAME perspective as I am the only panel member representing this view so can offer insights to team members, who are really friendly to work with, and help share learning.

If I don't understand anything in relation to what I need to know to be a panel member the staff at the Foundation are always available to talk and explain. They have been very supportive; I also get emails and information updates on meetings, new developments and anything I need to know.

## Our Activities

AWHG's strength is that our team of workers, Management Committee members and staff are *very much part* of the community in which we live and work.

The fact that women hear of us by word-of-mouth from friends and neighbours means we are able to reach lone parents, older women and families who are not likely to have the confidence, digital and/or the language skills to go to mainstream services or get information online.

It may seem that we 'do too much' for some, taking them as needed to doctors' appointments, solicitors' offices and schools, these visits often mean that really vulnerable women learn in the process about steps they can take to sort out any problems arising in future. Connecting them with peers also means they can then share experiences and informally create a gradual collective for learning as women build confidence and skills to do these things on their own.

When we first started our organisation it was horrible – there was a bi community organisation and the only one which existed.

We faced so much opposition when we wanted to start our group, they didn't want us to be in competition; everyone knew them in the council and we didn't know anything really – we just wanted to give

women the support that they needed and just kept on doing what we were doing. It made a lot of difference to peoples' lives.

Yet with the number of refugees coming to Sheffield there weren't enough people to help - they were knocking on our doors. We were not involved in the bigger networks, we just kept on doing what we knew what to do - it wasn't about recognition but about delivering the service.

We didn't give up. We used the council building which was free and we were all volunteers. We just wanted to help the women and children coming to us - we were completely self-help.

The first time we put in an application as we wanted to take the women out - it was the first payment ever for women and children to go out on a day trip.

No one could believe that we managed to put this together as they thought they were the only ones who could deliver services. It was the most simple thing - and they were not happy.

Young people run it now and they are open-minded.

Now that people have seen us join festival meetings

## **Outings: Exploring Local Public Resources**

Outings have been particularly popular this year. Each has given an average of 17 women the chance to join one of 20 2-hourly sessions and get out to explore our wider neighbourhood.

A number of participants have taken home seeds to grow vegetables, herbs and flowers in their own gardens. While some cultural communities including women of Bangladeshi heritage have shown themselves adept horticulturalists while others, including women of Somali heritage who are from nomadic herding cultures, are only just beginning to learn.

While equipping themselves to make better use of garden spaces and grow food for themselves and their families, our fledging team of home growers have benefited from an excuse to get outside, with or without children, for gentle exercise.

We look forward to encouraging further walks, learning about horticulture and, if possible, encourage women from different communities to share experiences to learn from one another!

## **Advocacy Support and Learning from Lockdown Anxiety, Food Poverty, the Power of Reconnection and Creative Community Resilience**

Advocates for women seeking help with correspondence from doctors and schools, learning about disability and caring benefits or for signposting for family support, basic skills training or how to progress into employment. She is supported by volunteers including interpreters who translate

As our face-to-face activities were suspended, AWHG's two p/t staff began to receive telephone calls for help. We began to undertake home visits to help families and older women shielding and unable to leave home to source much-needed medication, food and help. Before long we were joined by a dedicated team of volunteers who helped daily in delivering food, activity packs for restless children, paperwork in need of review and signatures by clients supported in filling forms via telephone and WhatsApp. When lockdown was lifted over summer months, volunteers also stepped in to join groups of socially-distancing women, many elderly, as well as children and families taking walks, exercising in the park, cycling and visiting the Darnall allotments Wednesday mornings with support from Corrie Moss from SAMCHa who provided allotment space, seeds, fresh produce and tools which visitors could take back home to grow in their own back gardens and window boxes.

Families, young and old, faced constant change as frontline workers in retail, catering and

### **Khadra working quite hard with women arriving from India**

Changes in complex family welfare circumstances daily, working remotely often our team had to take clients, step-by-step, through a process of identifying the nature of letters and paperwork received by first identifying logos at the top of a letter, then dates and reference numbers, often moving between telephone conversations, photographs and, occasionally, WhatsApp video calls as we guided women through mini-lessons on reading paperwork in tandem with tips for improved digital literacy.

While the process of teaching and empowering service-users with a range of new skills which, just one year ago, we thought were

impossible to achieve, this also meant our advocacy support calls also doubled as capacity-building tutorials. This also meant it took far longer than usual to help women sort out or be signposted externally to sort out specialist welfare issues, particularly as families losing wage earners also found women becoming heads of households and dealing with some issues for the first time.

As BAME women, often:

- Lack digital technology and equipment, finances for Wifi access and digital skills to speedily and effectively work remotely, our support sessions to some of the hardest-to-reach women in Sheffield have also included sessions for digital education;
- BAME clients, most of whom are single parents caring for young children excluded from school over COVID lockdowns as well as family members who are unwell;

BAME women with limited digital, English language skills, equipment, school books and experience of British educational systems face additional challenges in trying to assist their children, who are statistically falling behind in fulfilling their educational potential, and have routinely turned to AWHG's team for advice in managing additional parenting and educational challenges;

- BAME women with whom we routinely engage are often extremely isolated, experience anxiety and depression as they face particularly challenging issues including bereavement, homelessness and their own illness while caring for shielding children and parents – often on their own. As AWHG's team might represent the only people they speak to who they feel might be able to help them dig their way out of intertwined financial and emotional crisis, telephone advice sessions took far longer than normal;

Additionally, our own staff have been similarly juggling needs of children, family and convalescing family members - as well as our own illnesses and confinement.

In light of increased anxiety amongst women calling for help and concerns about the wellbeing of some clients, we are looking to facilitate further Safeguarding training so staff, tutors and volunteers alike are better equipped to detect and address safety issues ranging from financial and child abuse to domestic violence, as well as First Aid Mental Health training to update and review our approaches when listening to clients and helping identify strategies for coping with isolation, family demand and fears of an uncertain

future – particularly where women have come from war zones and often, have never spoken or explored issues arising as a result. The word ‘depression’ does not, for instance, exist in Somali –meaning that language to explore poor mental health is very limited. One woman, for instance, regularly visited us when face-to-face services were available to silently cry – tears streaming down – without saying a word.

Mainstream mental health services, in addition, are rarely available in Somali languages and often lack insights into the cultures, social expectations and needs of women from marginalised cultural communities.

A lack of digital skills and understanding of processes as services continue to be transferred online has made some of our most marginalised residents increasingly more vulnerable. As face-to-face help and guidance on processing systems face closures and replacement by online services, concerns have also risen for increasingly more socially excluded communities.

Women lacking literacy and digital skills to flag, respond to online queries, or check that benefit payments are made on time and correctly and, where administrative errors are made, address under-payment, missed deadlines and opportunities to claim much-needed entitlements.

More than anything, an absence of face-to-face and ‘one-stop-shops’ support from local authorities and advice agencies means clients have nowhere to turn for personalised support to review complex and uncertain circumstances where work has stopped, started, decreased or family wage earners are deceased, or to help unpick issues in times of change and distress.

‘One-size-fits-all’ online service-formats do not always apply to individual circumstances or allow for further clarification needed where residents are seeking help. As they additionally require a level of confidence, administrative, English language and digital skills which exclude some of Britain’s most socio-economically and culturally marginalised communities, statutory and voluntary sector drives to cut costs are further excluding those for whom the services are purportedly designed.

Where clients do not know how to access help online, do not know how to call and make appointments and have been shielded due to their own or wider family vulnerabilities, it is likely that many have not accessed the right support and are not receiving the correct entitlement with possible overpayments occurring.

In spite of concern arising from anecdotal evidence that further sectors of vulnerable and isolated individuals have as yet been

unable to access services to make welfare claims where they are shielding, don't know where to turn for help or where their work, housing and immigration status are in flux, demand for benefits such as Carers' Allowances have increased.

## **Case Study 1:**

### **Counselling**

It has been a challenging year as we sought to rebuild and reconnect with local BAME women, many in crisis because of poor physical, emotional health variously juggling with additional caring and parenting responsibilities, isolation, a loss of employment and income, bereavement, food poverty and rising energy bills where individuals or whole families spent long, cold winter months locked down at home.

Even as our team addressed changes in their own personal lives, an alarming rise in please for support with critical welfare issues at a time when mainstream services and statutory bodies closed, re-grouped remotely and experienced their own disruptions forced us to think quickly, creatively and flexibly to keep reaching and helping others navigating through difficult periods.

Our team were also concerned about safeguarding and safety issues, particularly where service-users for whom we might be a key contact for advocacy, guidance and support are isolated by language and digital barriers from mainstream information.

Even as anxiety levels soared, so did domestic violence. While household confinement with an abuser typically amplified scales of abuse, services available to help them escape an already challenging situation were closed, harder to find, as were friends who might normally help when not shielding.

To better address family wellbeing and, in the case of women living in nuclear and extended family households, trying to help prevent further family breakdown and welfare issues, we identified and engaged a qualified and experienced BAME counsellor to facilitate groups on Zoom and, where issues were complex and in need of a greater level of confidentiality, one-to-one session as well.

### **English as a Second Language Classes (ESOL)**

Our learners are of Pakistani, Libyan, Somali, Sudanese,

Bangladeshi, Yemeni, Syrian, Eritrean, Ethiopian, Afghani, Iraqi, Kurdish and Turkish heritage. Most are over the age of 25 and the oldest, mostly in pre-entry classes, are over the age of 60.

While most say they want to improve their English language skills so they can fill forms, speak with GPs, teachers and neighbours, others want to move into volunteering, basic skills and vocational training for employment.

Crucially, women joining classes say it offers them a unique chance to get out of home and meet others. Bonds formed move beyond the classrooms and help knit together a community of women who help one another out in times of challenge.

From September 2019, 20 women attended one of two *Pre-entry Level 1* classes facilitated during term time at our Subud Centre base, and a further 50 attended *Pre-Entry Level 2, 3 and Level 1*.

## Childcare

We normally run three cycles of 12-week *NVQ (National Vocational Qualification Childcare) Entry Level 1* training over the course of each academic year for 12 women each term in partnership with *Red Tape, Sheffield Council's Skills for Life* tutor Helen Haythorne. *Darnell Community Nursery* also provide work experience placements for *AWHG* trainees.

## Digital Drop-in

Given the growing digitalization of public services including the management of doctors' appointments, housing forms, school news and welfare support, women who have no digital devices at home have increasingly come to the Subud Centre asked for help. Many need help to fill out statutory forms, to search for employment, update their CVs or coaching on the history of England so as to take *Life in the UK* exams.

By helping women to improve their digital skills, we hope to empower a wider community to become more self-sufficient and better manage their own lives.

provide activities in a safe, pro-active and friendly environment. While sharing skills with a wider community of women, it also equipped participants with nationally-recognised certificates improving their track record and chances to secure potential further volunteering and employment opportunities!

Lockdown, of course,

## **Sewing Sessions**

### **Outings and Family Activities**

**Cycle rides - 6 per groups - once or twice a week**

**Walks around Sheffield - groups of 10 women - some of the volunteers**

**2-3 times a week - guided walks**

**Kids - Corrie can take them -10 at a time - 3 x a week - 2 sessions back-to-back - Corrie teaches one kid from each family and they then go on to teach siblings**

**Kits of pots and plants - home kits**

**Crafts - given bits for home crafts - some don't have it -**

**Craft packages and weekly Zoom meetings to connect**

## **ommunication is Key!**

### **African Women's Health Group and Covid Challenges in 2020-21 May 2021**

It's been a challenging year. Language and digital skills are a major barrier where women might have no idea where to turn for help.

Sometimes when women get in touch, it isn't just to get information because sometimes we are the only people they have been able to talk to about the stress and challenges they are facing and struggling to cope with. Sometimes it helps people just to be heard as it help them to work out what to do next, with or without much input.

When some women come to the centre to learn English, they really really want to learn - they ask lots of questions, feel safe because it's a women-only centre and they can meet women just like themselves.

**a) Refugees have been dropped into Sheffield from Indian UN camps during lockdown - and are now told they are only**

entitled to a housing support worker for the first 12 months – after which they have no more help. They aren't even signposted to where they can go and if they try to call the number again, they're told not to call again.

Some are depressed, others have disabled children and inappropriate accommodations, some have problems at school and are in need of help and support. That's when we step in and spend whole days helping to sort paperwork out, go with women to hospital appointments or, where older women might be distressed and have trouble remembering their appointments or simply don't feel confident to go on their own we go with them.

**b) A Lack of Accountability is becoming worse as Face-to-Face Services disappear** - increasingly women who *do* speak English are contacting us to say they have spent hours on the phone, calling and calling again for services which then cuts off after 45 minutes – after which they have to ring again. **This also means that our own workers are spending more time with women simply trying to get through to help.**

c) **Frontline workers such as cleaners and social care workers on zero hour contracts** did not know how to claim when they were isolating after getting Covid and had no income to help their families. Many did not make claims for grants which they were entitled to; the benefits office say a lot hasn't been claimed but that people need to come forward and that they cannot contact the people to tell them it's available. Meanwhile families are struggling.

d) **Furlough:** Other women who do **cleaning and are social care workers** were on **furlough** also did not know they were entitled to 20% of their salaries from elsewhere. **Without knowing what their contracts say, they don't know what their rights are, have sometimes gone out to work with Covid as they cannot afford not to work and have no idea that they are entitled to support elsewhere. They are also afraid to say anything about their employers as they fear they will lose the income upon which they depend to support their families.**

e) Others are sent to find **private accommodations** and will be charged more than they should for housing; they are obliged to pay the balance over what **Universal Credit** will contribute which comes out of money for utility bills family food and care.

f) Women who are here on spousal visas are also sometimes sent home by their husbands and don't know what their rights are.

Inequality of access to service, language barriers, digital challenges and simply trying to cope with not getting a break from the stress of

being single parents or being alone with kids at home while their husbands were out at work has been an issue over Covid with many of the women we work with.

AWHG is considering doing work to help publicize this and perhaps help women fill out forms.

Perhaps a joint project with CAB, ourselves and others could help us advertise in posters, online and face-to-face, to help local people gain the funds they are entitled to.

A further round of government lockdown restrictions in early January 2021 alongside a rapid increase of COVID cases locally - which also affected members of our own staff -

As our face-to-face activities were suspended, in a neighbourhood where a higher-than-national-average residents have died 2021, leading to major changes in complex family welfare circumstances daily, working remotely often our team had to take clients, step-by-step, through a process of identifying the nature of letters and paperwork received by first identifying logos at the top of a letter, then dates and reference numbers, often moving between telephone conversations, photographs and, occasionally, WhatsApp video calls as we guided women through mini-lessons on reading paperwork in tandem with tips for improved digital literacy.

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correctly and, where administrative errors are made, address under-payment, missed deadlines and opportunities to claim much-needed entitlements.

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'One-size-fits-all' online service-formats do not always apply to individual circumstances or allow for further clarification needed where residents are seeking help. As they additionally require a level of confidence, administrative, English language and digital skills which exclude some of Britain's most socio-economically and culturally marginalised communities, statutory and voluntary sector drives to cut costs are further excluding those for whom the services are purportedly designed.

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In spite of concern arising from anecdotal evidence that further sectors of vulnerable and isolated individuals have as yet been unable to access services to make welfare claims where they are shielding, don't know where to turn for help or where their work, housing and immigration status are in flux, demand for benefits such as Carers' Allowances have increased.

It's so upsetting when you have no one to turn to and no one to help you out - spent a whole day with a refugee lady who has a disabled child - it seems their key refugee support worker did nothing when she asked for help in having a word with the school because her daughter has been coming home regularly with bruises on her hands - but no one did anything at all.

### **Coronavirus:**

Covid lockdown and isolation caused severe mental distress to many of our service-users including single parents, older women and refugees who had previous experiences of trauma, displacement

and bereavement which amplified their levels of anxiety, depression and loss.

We offered a lot of telephone support over the Covid period, guiding women with filling housing and benefits forms, particularly where women have limited literacy and writing skills, while advising and emotionally supporting women who were feeling vulnerable. With help from five volunteers, we also delivered 100 food packs, medicines, activity packs and homework sheets for ESOL class participants who could not go online. This included older people and our Homework Club children. We also intervened when self-isolation and hospitalisation meant women needed support in collecting medicines, foods etc.

Patience and help from children, funders and Sheffield College who enabled us to secure a total of 17 laptops for women, children and families most in need, led to half our 90 ESOL students joining classes via WhatsApp and children attending weekend Homework Clubs. Both served to connect and raise morale.

As many spoke of struggling with parenting, maintaining positive mental health and being in crisis, we offered twice-weekly group counseling groups for five women in each group while speaking one-to-one with individuals on an informal basis. Our online weekend Homework Club also supported young people preparing to pass exams and helped us identify children who left at home alone when parents have been to hospital and left them alone - and without food. Young people attending our Homework Club were also invited to online talks with former learners who explained how they made their way to university where their parents had never been and how they work in their chosen field of interest. As with adults, our aim is to share hope and stay connected, helping refugee families who have arrived during lockdown periods with limited support and no awareness of how to find their way.

Over the summertime we also informally organised walks with older women, meeting in the park when the weather was good enough to go out, and invited families and groups of up to 10 to meet Corrie Moss who organises Wednesday afternoon food growing sessions at the Darnall allotments in spring and summer. Our Outreach Advocate was also asked to support family cycle rides to safely socialise and exercise when neighbours saw her go out with her own children and asked to join in!

Our team was also contacted by refugees who were brought to Sheffield during lockdown from a UN camp in India and we continue to support a Somali-heritage single mother who's disabled child struggles at school and in housing with steep steps; sadly it seems

the agency responsible for helping her to settle failed to address a range of issues which we are only just learning about now.

As women come out of lockdown, some having lost wage-earners, some now widowed or single heads of families, they are coming to us for help with learning how to go online, how to fill out forms and where to go for help. Many have limited IT, English language skills and confidence to fill out forms even as more and more services now require that they go online to address housing, doctors' appointments, further training for employment and welfare benefits.

AWHG's Somali-speaking Outreach Advocate is struggling to keep up with demand as she also accompanies women to appointments when they need advocacy and interpreting support while also interviewing BAME women about whether they have had Covid vaccinations, their experiences if they have and why they haven't had the vaccination if not; all this information is shared with the CCG to help raise awareness about community concerns about Covid vaccination programmes.

While about half of our ESOL learners have been able to continue courses and are now taking exams, many haven't been able to progress as they normally would in learning over the lockdown period. We look forward to a time when we will be able to open our centre again and safely resume face-to-face sessions in our risk-assessed centre!

As the good weather finally arrives, we are also keen to resume outings to growing sessions at our local allotment or at home and, according to circumstances, healthy cooking sessions linked to growing veg and herbs at home and sewing sessions!

## **Communication is Key!**

### **African Women's Health Group and Covid Challenges in 2020-21 May 2021**

It's been a challenging year. Language and digital skills are a major barrier where women might have no idea where to turn for help.

Sometimes when women get in touch, it isn't just to get information because sometimes we are the only people they have been able to talk to about the stress and challenges they are facing and struggling to cope with. Sometimes it helps people just to be heard

as it help them to work out what to do next, with or without much input.

When some women come to the centre to learn English, they really really want to learn – they ask lots of questions, feel safe because it's a women-only centre and they can meet women just like themselves.

**a) Refugees have been dropped into Sheffield from Indian UN camps during lockdown** – and are now told they are only entitled to a housing support worker for the first 12 months – after which they have no more help. They aren't even signposted to where they can go and if they try to call the number again, they're told not to call again.

Some are depressed, others have disabled children and inappropriate accommodations, some have problems at school and are in need of help and support. That's when we step in and spend whole days helping to sort paperwork out, go with women to hospital appointments or, where older women might be distressed and have trouble remembering their appointments or simply don't feel confident to go on their own we go with them.

**b) A Lack of Accountability is becoming worse as Face-to-Face Services disappear** - increasingly women who *do* speak English are contacting us to say they have spent hours on the phone, calling and calling again for services which then cuts off after 45 minutes – after which they have to ring again. **This also means that our own workers are spending more time with women simply trying to get through to help.**

**c) Frontline workers such as cleaners and social care workers on zero hour contracts** did not know how to claim when they were isolating after getting Covid and had no income to help their families. Many did not make claims for grants which they were entitled to; the benefits office say a lot hasn't been claimed but that people need to come forward and that they cannot contact the people to tell them it's available. Meanwhile families are struggling.

**d) Furlough:** Other women who do **cleaning and are social care workers** were on **furlough** also did not know they were entitled to 20% of their salaries from elsewhere. **Without knowing what their contracts say, they don't know what their rights are, have sometimes gone out to work with Covid as they cannot afford not to work and have no idea that they are entitled to support elsewhere. They are also afraid to say anything about their employers as they fear they will lose the income upon which they depend to support their families.**

e) Others are sent to find **private accommodations** and will be charged more than they should for housing; they are obliged to pay the balance over what **Universal Credit** will contribute which comes out of money for utility bills family food and care.

f) Women who are here on spousal visas are also sometimes sent home by their husbands and don't know what their rights are.

Inequality of access to service, language barriers, digital challenges and simply trying to cope with not getting a break from the stress of being single parents or being alone with kids at home while their husbands were out at work has been an issue over Covid with many of the women we work with.

AWHG is considering doing work to help publicize this and perhaps help women fill out forms.

Perhaps a joint project with CAB, ourselves and others could help us advertise in posters, online and face-to-face, to help local people gain the funds they are entitled to.

**Example: Sunday, Monday and Tuesday:**

We work with women and their children so in the previous question, we just said women; the funding allowed AWHG to meet the needs of women who were in crisis in a way which we would not have been able to do without additional help. We would most likely have continued to talk to women and help deliver food and advice wherever possible but we most likely would have burnt out and not been able to keep helping new people calling because they were lonely, kids had no adults at home, people were losing their loved ones or single parents, who represent most of our service-users, were overwhelmed by caring for children alone at home, stressed, bereaving and where women had previously experienced war situations as refugees, were traumatised as bad memories returned as we faced an uncertain future. Several young people have also committed suicide but we are unsure whether they were stressed or depressed.

Our service is varied – so here's an example of a week during lockdown periods:

Sometimes we get calls from young people saying their mothers are seriously depressed, asking us to come visit, take them out or help shift them into a more positive mood. As we have listened, supported, encouraged women throughout the last year who sometimes feel to be on the edge of a breakdown – particularly where they have previously faced trauma and displacement which studies confirm makes people more vulnerable – we started our week on Sunday by taking a group of

16 women and children to the Peak District in a small minibus for their first group outing since lockdown. These outings are really special because most of the women coming to us don't have the transport, resources or knowledge of what resources exist for them to join. We walked, picnicked and were amazed by the number of people passing by who called out to us and ask how we were, cheering us on and making us feel welcome.

Several have called to say it was the best thing they have done in over a year and that they feel like a cloud has been lifted. As we can only take small groups at present, we are also planning a series of trips with a small grant to take women and children who've been locked indoors for months on end to go swimming, for walks, exercise in the park and outdoors activities to help get them going again.

While some clients are able to negotiate issues with a bit of signposting, advice and encouragement, many simply don't have a good enough command of the English language to understand what they have to do, where to go and what to say. We often find, for instance, that older women will not have opened letters and have missed crucial deadlines for action. This means, for instance, that we spent hours on Tuesday at an office trying to get help for a woman at risk of missing the deadline for completing paperwork for her Settled Status. Even getting laptops on offer from Sheffield College resulted in our P/t Outreach Advocate accompanying women to fill out paperwork as they were unsure where to go, who to speak to and were lacking confidence to make this happen. This means taking small steps to show women where to go and how to get services they need through practical joint visits.

Monday morning we were inundated with requests for help from women taking Entry Level 2 ESOL exams who had been redirected to Sheffield College to take their exams; we took seven women down to the college to make sure they know where to go as they are sitting *speaking, listening, reading and writing* exams on different days this week. Some women are breastfeeding and we might help find babysitters and help them get there and back quickly as they might otherwise cancel altogether and not progress as our facility is currently closed.

We are also about to start registering further 95 women for next year's ESOL classes and, as it is now online, some need help with filling the forms and knowing what evidence they need to send to be able to attend without paying fees. We will also be able to take new students off our waiting list for Entry Level ESOL classes in September as several of our older students have passed away this year.

Part of Monday was spent with a refugee family who arrived from India during lockdown last June; the disabled child of one mother has repeatedly come home with bruising which the g them in explaining their needs to a GP, addressing a disabled and recently arrived child's needs at school after she has repeatedly come home with bruises.

## **Lockdown**

Lockdown has led to a lot of family breakdown, bereavement and women visiting one another when they feel isolated. We spent a lot of time reminding families of the risk they were putting themselves and their families under before women began to share these insights and change their visiting habits. Our Outreach Advocate has also been undertaking interviews with neighbours and parents at school gates, in shops and parks to learn about why people might not have been vaccinated and to share insights from learning we have gained through joining a series of Zoom meetings over the past six months with doctors sharing information to address fears and rumours about negative side effects of Covid.

While we sometimes signpost clients to telephone translators for GPs or ask volunteers to help, in critical situations where a client needs an advocate to make sure they receive the support they need which might not otherwise be forthcoming, we accompany them in person.

As p/t workers, we are also organising to take some young people horse riding as lockdown ends with funds saved on venue costs from a small grant obtained over lockdown.

## **7. Learning, sharing, and networking**

We will ask you to report on progress during the grant, so explain how you will track your progress and learn from this so that it helps you to develop and improve. Tell us about:

- how your learning will be shared and used more widely and how you will apply it to refine and improve your work.

In terms of monitoring our impact, we keep registrations for all classes, group activities and each advice issue or visit needed with notes about why people have come and how we progress. Teachers at each class of 10-20 students ask each to tell whether they feel they have progressed and how so we can measure our progress; as most of our service-users communicate by word-of-mouth, we also hold meetings twice a year to ask whether women need different services, a different way of doing what we already provide and how we can do better. Our Homework Club students also have termly reviews to which parents come which also sometimes leads to learning about issues families might be facing which might not otherwise have come to light. All of this information is pulled together in reports to funders and also in our annual report which comes out with our accounts each year.

Outside of formal partnerships with Sheffield College, the Subud Centre, Darnall Children's Centre who take work experience placements from our Childcare students and Red Tape who provide trainers for our Level 1 and 2, our Project Manager and Acting Chair has also been invited to be part of the Sheffield Partnership Board which runs hubs such as the Vaccine Voluntary Action Sheffield Covid Response hub or Migration Matters.

While this has strongly connected us with a range of health, statutory, voluntary sector and community partnerships to consider issues ranging from debt management, a lack of Covid vaccination uptake amongst BAME communities, the Windrush legacy and more, it also helps us learn about wider issues affecting local communities which we did not always have time to think about while running around to help women in neighbourhoods with personal emergencies.

The network also looks at hardship funding, Covid recovery strategies and means of finding solutions; we have been told that our own input on how it has impacted BAME communities has also been really valuable.

AWHG also regularly cross refers clients to local advice organisations such as the CAB, with whom we have developed a stronger relationship through online meetings over the Covid period, as well as with Asiana, to whom we refer women faced with domestic abuse and in need of specialist support, local schools in Darnall, Attecliffe and Tinsley, GP surgeries, hospitals and our local allotments where the wonderful Corrie Moss supports our families each Wednesday afternoon by showing them how to plant, when, what seeds to use and to sample the produce through healthy cooking information and normally, through practical sessions at our centre.

Over the lockdown period, as we have moved online and begun to access Zoom meetings for the first time to join discussion panels about poverty, the impact of the pandemic and how it has affected BAME women in particular, our Project Manager has often represented the voice of women who's needs might not otherwise be considered.

While connecting with a range of local organisations who were unaware of AWHG's work, this has also helped us explain to larger service providers about the challenges that some of our service users face when trying to access mainstream services.

Our Project Manager was also invited three years ago to join a grants panel with *South Yorkshire Community Foundation*, and has learnt, on the other hand, from reading through a range of grant applications about different approaches community organisations have taken to addressing challenges faced by vulnerable residents from around our region as well. They have been very supportive and recently wrote to say thank you for insights!

She has also been invited to join *Voluntary Action Sheffield's* interview panel for a new CEO; while each new invitation also brings a bit of nervousness, with a bit of courage, one small step in taking part in new forums, online or face-to-face, has led to more learning while allowing us to help explain the issues faced by really isolated BAME women so their needs are better understood by wider community networks.

### **Women Win a College Badge!**

With lockdown in place and classes moved online, Sheffield College asked for women to come to their main campus to register for classes rather than attend sites at their local community centres. It isn't next door and some women with limited English language were scared to go alone, particularly after tales of a fierce and impatient college receptionist emerged when she told a hesitant woman lacking confidence in her spoken English that she *didn't have time to wait around all day* and urged the woman to speak faster.

In the event, Khadra volunteered to take a group and travelled with six women to sign in. As part of the process women who might never have finished secondary school or held a certificate from the UK were issued with Sheffield College photo IDs and numbers with their names emblazoned. Dazzled as they emerged from the college, tags round their necks, one woman held up her card and stated she was ...*'going to tell my husband that now I am an official college student he'll have to remember to treat me better!'*

Photos were duly taken of the occasion with women proudly holding up their freshly pressed IDs.

### **Media Profile**

We are not great at chasing media coverage but BBC Children in Need - our Project Worker has been meeting with others via Darnall Partnership and Voluntary Action Sheffield meeting and noticed that some groups don't know we exist - but the *Zoom* meetings are the best thing that has happened as we have met so many other people at meetings we might not have to otherwise attend.

*BBC Children in Need* who fund our Homework Club have also just gotten in touch as they want to know more about how we managed with help they gave over lockdown, so it does help when we get chased to give information about our work and get the word out!

### **Vaccinations**

Our Outreach Advocate has outreached weekdays to women at school gates, shopping centres and in parks where she has informally engaged with some of our ward's hardest-to-reach BAME women of Arab, Somali, Bangladeshi and Pakistani heritage to ask whether they have been vaccinated, if not, why, as we seek to source feedback on reservations people might have about being

vaccinated. It is helpful that she has primary school aged children as it brings her into contact with a range of local residents daily, including older women she visits at home.

Our Outreach Advocate has facilitated in-depth interviews with 15 women to date.

Some women have not as yet received notification for their vaccinations while others feel they want to wait and see what more information comes out about vaccine safety before taking a decision to go ahead.

Our Outreach Advocate regularly checks up on older residents as many have been shielding since March 2020. An 80-odd Somali heritage woman said she hadn't as yet been offered an appointment but, upon following up, it turned out that she hadn't opened much of her correspondence as she doesn't read English and so was unaware that an appointment was available for her. We therefore followed up and booked an appointment for her to receive her vaccination shortly.

One aspect of our work is to follow up with clients and help them learn to identify logos at the top of letterheads so they know who has written to, check headings, dates of appointments and information as we empower local women with tools to overcome limited English language skills and to take first steps in better managing urgent personal matters and alerting us when they need direct help and interventions.

Now that our Outreach Advocate has been vaccinated and is less likely to pose a health risk to vulnerable residents, she will continue outreaching informally to parents at school, parks and a wider community out shopping while visiting older residents who are shielding, isolated and more likely to struggle with following instructions to access vaccinations. She will at all times wear a mask, gloves and maintain social distancing so as to limit any risk to negatively

## **SURVEY: 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2021**

### **Vaccinations**

#### **What activities have you undertaken over the last two weeks?**

Our Outreach Advocate interviewed a further seven women both to find out if they have been vaccinated and to learn why they might and might not want to be vaccinated; while speaking to BAME parents at school gates and in parks, she is also approaching BAME neighbours on her street.

## How many people have you reached?

Seven heads of households have been interviewed.

## Insights?

A lot of families are being cautious as we come out of lockdown so are likely to be in public spaces or to chat outside school gates as we normally do.

This means it's a bit more difficult to speak to strangers so most of our interviews are being made with people that we know but the learning we are sharing is spreading because the people we speak with highlight friends and relatives being offered vaccinations who might be hesitant to take them up.

It helps that she herself and her husband has had Covid, was nearly taken into hospital in January 2021, and have since both had the vaccination, though she is only in her late 30s. Her husband works in a warehouse so pro-actively went to the hospital to ask to be vaccinated as he does not want to get Covid again or spread the disease. This means our Outreach Advocate can also speak from experience when encouraging neighbours and older people, in particular, to consider doing the same.

Stories reported still include a taxi driver who said that the vaccination makes people infertile but some attitudes are beginning to change as more people they know are being vaccinated and after talking to them, it has made a lot of difference as they feel more fearful.

## Case study

Since first speaking to women about taking the vaccine, five women have come forward to have vaccinations themselves; one spoke of hearing negative stories but had gone back to do research and decided to go ahead. The team she saw spoke to her about side-effects and what might happen which gave her confidence and she will be returning for a second vaccination in due time.

Another woman said she was very nervous and scared when she went for her vaccination but the staff were very helpful and encouraging. She had headaches and tingling after having her vaccination but felt normal again after a few days.

'My overall experience of having my Covid vaccination has been positive; I had heard good stories and so when I finally decided to get the vaccine and book an appointment after I got my letter, I had a very bad headache and felt weak which the nurse said was a side effect of the virus. I felt better after 3 days...' Client 1

'When I received my vaccine I did not know what to expect. The only difference I felt was the pain in the arm. I had slight headaches the day after but did not experience discomfort and have already booked my second appointment.' Client 2

'I had read so many things online which made me scared to take the vaccine but after seeing other people who had taken the vaccine, I decided to take it and am ok. I did have a chest problem for 2 weeks, though, and went to my GP who looked at it, and I was sent straight to the hospital. I was seen immediately and they gave me a lot of tests and I realized that the doctors in the hospitals were more concerned about patients who had already had the vaccination than otherwise to make sure they can monitor any possible problems. They took really really good care of me to make sure the vaccine didn't do anything bad to me and have booked me for more scans. I couldn't believe how thoroughly they were checking me to make sure the chest problem was not caused by the vaccine.' Client 3

### **What will you do over the next two weeks?**

Over the next two weeks the aim is to get a better idea of who has and hasn't had the vaccine to help people overcome fears so as to help talk through safety and the statistics of how many people actually experience blood clotting as a result of vaccination.

People are also asking what types of allergies prevent you from taking Over the next two weeks the aim is to get a better idea of who has and hasn't had the vaccine to help people overcome fears so as to help talk through safety and the statistics of how many people actually experience blood clotting as a result of vaccination.

People are also asking what types of allergies prevent you from taking vaccinations as they are not clear about which ones are of concern. The question has been raised many times and the information online isn't very clear.

## Homework Club: Our Proudest Successes!

Thanks to funding from *BBC Children in Need*, our sought Sunday morning Homework Club sessions for Year 7 & 8 students, Year 9 & 10 and Year 11 students in English, Maths and Sciences still thrives!

Led by two qualified tutors supporting 40 young people aged 11-16 with an hour each of GCSE-level Maths, English and Science, the programme is particularly helpful to households where parents have limited English language, educational experiences and resources to support children struggling at school.

Sessions are supported by two volunteers who themselves came to our Homework Club and, having succeeded in attending college, have become role models for learners who's own families might be torn apart by migration and parents seeking to find their way in sometimes 'chaotic' new circumstances.

We provide refreshments at the start, break-time and at the end of each club session. It helps make learning more sociable and breaks down stigmas amongst students who might feel embarrassed by school failure and afraid ask for help. Attempts to address poor academic achievements otherwise come late and parents, lacking skills and financial resources to find help, feel helpless. Those left behind by age 11 have a mountain to climb, do not know where to turn for help and often feel they are failures.

Originally established when parents came to tell stories of children failing at school, of their distressed and frustration at being unable to help, our Club soon became a place where young people, struggling with poor academic achievements and fast losing belief in themselves, could come to ask questions they were afraid to ask in class.

Older siblings, parents and neighbours are our best publicity routes as stories of former students, now working as lab technicians in local hospitals, in IT and analytical sciences, have become models for a further generation of young people who come with low educational attainment levels hoping we can help.

We interview each young person joining our group and listen to their personal, academic, emotional and home experiences as we try to gauge how best to help. Volunteers who themselves have attended our homework club are available to spend more time with individuals in need of additional help.

Our approach to teaching is shaped by their needs. As time goes by, we learn through class feedback, parents and one-to-one

conversations arising at breaks about further hidden needs which young people are embarrassed to talk about. We also ask young people about additional workshop topics they would like to explore.

By offering young people hope, social networks and support from teachers, peers and former learners as role models and advisors to help improve their performance in school, we hope to build confidence, resilience, 'know-how' and positive motivation amongst a generation of disadvantaged young people feeling bleak about the future.

Talks and outings to help them find their own ways through educational systems and issues such as bullying, school failure and a lack of understanding of what they can do, went online by inviting former Homework Club students, for instance, who have gone on to university and to jobs of their choice, to come back and talk to younger peers about how they found their way. While inspiring younger generations who's parents have often not completed secondary school to aim high, we continue to share learning through peer role modeling, with our own staff team, volunteers and Management members often demonstrating how each of us can take small steps and keep going until we do things we never imagined possible ourselves!

### **BBC Children In Need**

## **Outings: Exploring Local Public Resources**

**For 7 members of staff inc tutors and MC members in online safety in working with children**

**Cycle rides - 6 per groups - once or twice a week**

**Walks around Sheffield - groups of 10 women - some of the volunteers**

**2-3 times a week - guided walks**

**Kids - Corrie can take them -10 at a time - 3 x a week - 2 sessions back-to-back - Corrie teaches one kid from each family and they then go on to teach siblings**

**Kits of pots and plants - home kits**

**Crafts - given bits for home crafts - some don't have it -**

**Craft packages and weekly Zoom meetings to connect**

Website and online platforms

### **The Future of our Homework Club**

Subject to funding, we hope to invite young people over the next year to team up to lead monthly workshops on topics such as online safety, knife crime, cooking and, in light of a rise in racism, anti-bullying strategies to stay safe.

Our aim is to ask teams of young learners to help research, present and decide upon outings which might be free or low cost where we can visit at the end of each term and which young people might visit in their own free time.

We also hope to ask individuals to lead monthly hour and a half cooking sessions so we can explore topics of healthy eating and equip a younger generation with skills to take better care of themselves and their families.

Former attendees regarded as 'success stories' will also be invited to come back and talk about their learning and professional experiences so as to serve as role models, advisors, a source of hope and motivation for each young learner to do their best.

We hope that as a result of participating young learners will feel:

- More inspired;
- More informed about strategies to address knife crime, cyber bullying, addiction to gaming and healthy eating;
- Better networked to share information about school homework, exam preparation, where to go for further study after finishing school;
- More motivated to achieve their personal best;
- Less distressed;
- Less likely to feel depressed about their futures;
- Better equipped to deal with challenges ahead; and
- More positive about their futures!

**Thank You**

Many thanks to our funders including the **Big Lottery's Reaching Communities programme, BBC Children in Need, Sheffield City Council, the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), the Talbot Trust and South Yorkshire Community Foundation**, the *Subud Centre* who's venue we use, supporters and volunteers who enable us to provide services at a time when cuts to public services and welfare have put vulnerable women and families at higher risk than ever.

Special thanks also to **Sheffield College** for providing resources and tutors to help local women achieve and believe in improving their lives!

### **Case Study: 488/500 words**

While AWHG's Homework Club attracts learners and families seeking help with schoolwork, it also provides a vehicle through which to address other issues arising in young peoples' lives.

Our Outreach Advocate joins lessons each Sunday to monitor online teaching and take registers; this also provides a chance to check on the wellbeing of students who don't sign on and whether they have support at home. Recently a young person reported that their father went into hospital, then their mother and the children became anxious, stressed unable to think of anything else or do normal things.

Our Outreach Advocate listened as they described their situation before helping the eldest identify an auntie in a nearby town who ultimately came to stay for three weeks before their parents returned home. She also provided shopping and support, even after the parents returned, as their children then became their carers.

As described by the oldest in the household in a thank you email to our team:

*I thought it was impossible that something like this would happen to us so I didn't take life very seriously. When this happened, it changed my perspective and thinking. It's made me think more positive about things as the people in these kinds of organisations really do their best to help and make a difference. For this I am truly grateful - they were there for us when my brothers, sisters and I were in a mess. It made a different to my life.*

Our Project Manager has also been learning about the challenges faced by parents of Somali children who are autistic and was invited to join a group run by a Somali woman in London had autistic child and went to a college to do a Masters and realised her daughter was not getting support she was entitled to so educated her child at

home instead; three different wards –one in school, one outside and one at home as children fight, school neglect and child gets bullied and outside, members of the public back off when seeing the child's behaviour.

By joining weekend sessions, we are also learning more about specific challenges facing BAME women and children at school so we are better equipped to listen, informally identify learning difficulties faced by children attending our Homework Club and begin to help parents, teachers and young people begin to seek help; it was our Project Worker, asked by teachers and parents for help, who realised a young person joining our Homework Club might be autistic and shared this insight with parents and teachers at school who didn't know what was wrong. He continues joining our supportive and inclusive Homework Club sessions where he sits in the classroom with others, does what he wants to do and clearly wants to sit with the others; his mother noted he loves attending the Homework Club but does not enjoy going to school. He particularly loves joining our refreshment breaks!

### **What difference does the funding make? 63 words**

We earned a further £5000 thanks to this grant.

When young people wanted more activities facilitated after school including cooking, fitness and outings, we were able to secure a small grant with a local trust thanks to having networks already established with young people attending our Homework Club. Your funding has therefore helped us sustain this crucial link which will also enable us to build on and explore further potential youth work.

### **Case Study 131 of 500 words**

**Before we were able to distribute laptops, parents were struggling to keep their children engaged, particularly where four children would fight to share one laptop. Family confrontation and friction contributed towards relationship breakdown while young people appeared to be depressed, lying in bed and complaining that they had nothing to do.**

**Some parents now say their children are actually enjoying learning from home and are keeping up with school work for the first time in the absence of destructive influences including drug abuse and gang violence.**

**Access to laptops also provides information to young people about how to stay safe online while following news at school**

**and with peers. In some cases, families also share laptops with neighbours who also have limited digital access or need help with printouts and homework.**

**AFRICAN WOMEN'S HEALTH GROUP  
RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNTS  
FOR THE YEAR ENDING 30th JUNE 2021**

**AFRICAN WOMEN'S HEALTH GROUP**

Balance Brought Forward	1,000
<b>Grants Received (Receipts)</b>	
The Talbot Trust	200
ABC Children of Love	1,200
Community Fund (W.A.P. Projects)	1,000
Sheffield College	100
Sheffield City Council	400
W.A.P. Sheffield	100
	<u>2,000</u>
2021 Education Scheme (W.A.P.)	1,000
	<u>3,000</u>

<b>Payments</b>	
Professional Workers	1,000
Transport & Car Expenses	100
Travel	100
IT/Office Costs	100
Admin Expenses	100
Welfare Expenses	100
Programme Fees	100

**FINANCIAL STATEMENTS  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30th JUNE 2021**

Professional Fees	1,000
Travel & Transport Expenses	100
IT/Office & Equipment Expenses	100
Management Expenses	100
Advertising	100
Insurance	100
Training	100
Programme Expenses	100
Welfare Expenses	100
Programme Building & Marketing Fees	100
Welfare	100
W.A.P.	100
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<u>2,000</u>

Residual Funds - 30th June 2021 1,000

Residual Funds - 30th June 2020 1,000

**AZIM & WAKAS  
CHARTERED CERTIFIED ACCOUNTANTS  
537 ABBEYDALE ROAD  
SHEFFIELD S7 1FU  
TEL 0114 2588067**

**AFRICAN WOMEN'S HEALTH GROUP**  
**RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNTS**  
**FOR THE YEAR ENDING 30.06.2021**

**ACCOUNTANTS REPORT**

	£	£
<b>Balance B/F 01.07.2020</b>		<b>Total</b> <b>20362</b>
<b>Grants Received (Restricted)</b>		
The Talbot Trust	5000	
BBC Children In Need	12915	
Community Fund (Covid Response)	26560	
Sheffield College	1540	
Sheffield City Council	4980	
NHS Sheffield	5000	
		55995
Job Retention Scheme-HMRC		7673
		<b>84030</b>
<b>Payments</b>		
Sessional Workers	4919	
Support & Link Workers	1870	
Salaries	17526	
Wages	10206	
HMRC-Paye	2552	
Admin Workers	1000	
Support Workers	3770	
Premises Rent	1115	
Telephone & Internet	575	
Travel & Refreshments Cost	1085	
Stationary & Equipment Repairs	3033	
Equipment Purchased	4000	
Interpreter	1050	
Accountancy	430	
Training	350	
Voluntary Expenses	1400	
Voluntary Action Sheffield	175	
Capacity Building & Consultancy Fees	3510	
Solicitors	550	
Misc	200	
<b>Total Expenses</b>		<b>59316</b>
Restricted Funds Available As At 30.06.2021		<b>24714</b>
<b>BALANCE AT BANK 30.06.2021</b>		<b>24714</b>
Less: Cheques presented after date		0
		<b>24714</b>



**ACCOUNTANT'S REPORT**

In connection with my examination, no material matters have come to my attention which gives me cause to believe that in any material respect the accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act or the accounts did not accord with the accounting records or accounts did not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a true and fair view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

I have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

**Azim & Wakas**  
**Chartered Certified Accountants**  
537 Abbeydale Road  
Sheffield S7 1FU

AZIM & WAKAS  
CHARTERED CERTIFIED ACCOUNTANTS  
537 ABBEYDALE ROAD  
SHEFFIELD S7 1FU  
TEL: 0114 268 8067

**CLIENT'S APPROVAL**

I approve these financial statements and confirm that I have made available all relevant records and information for their preparation.

Committee member ..... *Pina AlKhayat* ..... Dated *30/7/22* .....

Committee member ..... *H. Mohamed* ..... Dated *30.7.2022* .....

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**AFRICAN WOMEN'S HEALTH GROUP  
RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNTS  
FOR THE YEAR ENDING 30th JUNE 2021**

**AFRICAN WOMEN'S HEALTH GROUP**

Balance Brought Forward		1,000
<b>Receipts</b>		
Grants Received (Discretionary)		
The Talbot Trust	200	
ABC Children of Love	1,700	
Community Fund (W.A.P. Projects)	100	
Sheffield College	100	
Sheffield City Council	400	
W.A.P. Sheffield	100	
		2,600
2021 Education Scheme (W.A.P.)		100
		2,700
<b>Payments</b>		
Professional Workers	1,000	
Transport & Car Expenses	100	
Travel	100	
W.A.P. (W.A.P.)	100	
Admin Expenses	100	
W.A.P. (W.A.P.)	100	
Programme Fees	100	
Telephone & Internet	100	
Travel & Refreshment Costs	100	
Printing & Postage Expenses	100	
Equipment Purchase	100	
Insurance	100	
Utilities	100	
Training	100	
Printing Expenses	100	
Travel - Admin Staff	100	
Company Printing & Postage Exp	100	
W.A.P.	100	
W.A.P.	100	
<b>Total Payments</b>		2,600
Balance Carried Forward		1,000
		2,600
<b>REMARKS: ALL BANK STATEMENTS</b>		2,600
Have Been Checked and are Correct		2,600

**FINANCIAL STATEMENTS  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30th JUNE 2021**

**AZIM & WAKAS  
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**AFRICAN WOMEN'S HEALTH GROUP**  
**RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNTS**  
**FOR THE YEAR ENDING 30.06.2021**

**ACCOUNTANTS REPORT**

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Committee member ..... *Pina AlKhayat* ..... Dated *30/7/22* .....

Committee member ..... *H. Mohamed* ..... Dated *30.7.2022* .....

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