

ANNUAL REPORT

2017-2018



AMINA

The Muslim Women's
Resource Centre



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Building on the previous year's commitment for a robust organisational infrastructure, both the Board of Directors and Senior Management Team explored the organisation's 'health' and committed to developing staff leadership capacity. With this endeavour, the Board supported the CEO with a year long Fellowship on the Clore Social Leadership Programme and four staff members embarked on various leadership courses too.

Further to this we secured 12 months support from Pilotlight, a capacity building charity that provides strategic planning support through senior business people, to work together and plan for sustainability, development and growth. From this process, we prioritised governance and fundraising. In August a new Chair was appointed and a targeted recruitment drive took place to diversify our Board leadership, ensuring we had the required skills, geography and diversity represented to propel the organisation forward.

Some of our highlights this year have included launching our executive produced short film 'Hopscotch' which explored racist, sexist and Islamophobic street harassment. The film was a finalist at the Howling Wolf Film Festival and the official selection for the Women of the Lens Festival. We were a finalist and secured funding from the Rank Accelerator Programme for our 'A Taste of..' social enterprise in Dundee, which provides lunch deals and an evening dining from around the world, allowing women to develop their catering and entrepreneur skills, and for the organisation to further explore sustainability through the lens of potential enterprise ideas.

In March we ran our very own interfaith dialogue event, 'Tea with Me – A Muslim' in Edinburgh, attracting over 50 people in one morning. The event was designed to allow Muslim women to take the lead to share their own narrative about who they are, and address any misconceptions, or simply questions the wider public may have about Islam or Muslim women.

Adding to our awards, this year we were absolutely delighted to be amongst the first organisations to be supported by Dundee Voluntary Action to be awarded the Good Governance Award, a quality standard for Scottish Charities.

By supporting and essentially being part of the journey of Amina MWRC to empower, inspire and support Muslim Women, you've allowed for more than 4000+ women to benefit from provision this year – for that we give sincere thanks.

Raisah Ahmed
Chair

Samina Ansari
CEO

Helpline & Development

This project includes a number of key services provided by Amina MWRC such as the one to one telephone services for women, namely helpline and befriending, and it also delivers innovative approaches in tackling islamophobia, and negative stereotypes about Muslim women.

Helpline

The Helpline is a multi lingual listening ear and signposting service for Muslim women across Scotland. It's available Monday to Friday, 10am – 4pm for any Muslim-identified women and is free from mobiles and landlines. All calls are strictly confidential and non-judgemental, and our 20+ trained staff and volunteers will support clients in a faith and culturally-sensitive manner.

The most common disclosed ethnicity continued to be South Asian (26.7%), second being Arab, African, then White; and majority of callers ranged in age between 31-40. Most calls were related to 'Marriage & Relationships', closely followed by the second most common issue 'Domestic Abuse', followed by 'Mental Health'.

Other call issues such as 'Family' and 'Social Isolation' continued to increase from last year. Agency requests and signposting was also a popular part of our service.

0808 801 0301

| helpline@mwrc.org.uk

Telephone Befriending

Our 11 trained volunteer befrienders provided emotional support to 47 socially isolated Muslim women via weekly agreed phone calls. Most callers were referred by GPs, health teams and family, and required support in their first language, predominantly Urdu or Punjabi. 70% of those receiving befriending support reported an improved sense of wellbeing.

Shaykh on the Helpline

In response to an increase in Muslim women seeking Islamic advice on issues affecting their wellbeing, new provision on the helpline was launched late in 2017, in which an Islamic male scholar (Shaykh) was available to take live helpline calls once a month. Topics the Shaykh has addressed thus far include: Domestic Abuse, Mental Health & Wellbeing, Ramadan, Marriage & Relationships, Parenting and Hajj (Pilgrimage).

This is a really valuable service. You sound so balanced and non-judgemental. Nobody here makes me feel like my issues are insignificant.

-Helpline Caller

Thank you for helping me get my confidence back. I never thought I would be able to help others.

-Befriender

I learned that women who wear headscarves wear them by choice.

Most people confuse cultural traditions with Islamic rule.

-Pupils at Schools

Schools project

The Schools project involves presenting workshops in secondary schools with the aim to challenge negative stereotypes and break down misconceptions, while promoting open dialogue and understanding of issues around race and religion. These workshops are delivered by trained, supervised Muslim women volunteers.

From July 2017 to June 2018, we delivered workshops to 52 classes across 12 secondary schools in Scotland. We also spoke to every year group at Kings Park Secondary School in Glasgow as part of their 'Equality and Diversity Day'.

Consulting with teachers and collating the learning and experience of running this project for the last 8 years, this year we worked with the Al Waleed Centre, University of Edinburgh to create a toolkit providing relevant content and interactive resources with up-to-date curriculum guidelines for S2 – S5 pupils. The toolkit will be available online from our website from September 2018.

Helpline & Development (cont'd)

Campaigns

In the current climate of anti Muslim sentiment, Muslim women are often at the forefront of being labelled and having their multiple identities debated by others, not duly given autonomy over their narrative. Based on this, the team worked on developing our newest campaign #ReclaimTheName, allowing for Muslim women to use our platform to express their identities in a positive way and inspire others to do the same.

We created and shared a powerful one minute promotional video (available on Amina MWRC's YouTube channel) aiming to challenge negative stereotypes about Muslim women. Part of the campaign so far has also invited Muslims and the wider community to consider words that are often misconstrued in the media such as 'jihad', reclaiming the meaning from it's narrow, militant and masculinised connotations of war.

Events

This year our larger community cohesion event open to all was 'Tea With Me – A Muslim' in Edinburgh. The purpose was to create a safe and open space for dialogue, primarily led by Muslim women themselves on

popular topics that they are often asked about: "Love and Marriage in Islam", "Women's rights", "Converts", "Hijab/Modesty" and "Jihad". All participants were able to move around and explore topics of interest to them, engaging with a diverse group of Muslim women. 100% of the participants reported they had benefited from the event.

We continued to run roadshows, this year specifically about hate crime, how it affects Muslim women and their communities, reporting, views on tackling it, and more. At all the roadshows at least 2 participants had admitted seeing or experiencing hate crime first-hand.

Taking learning from the roadshows we:

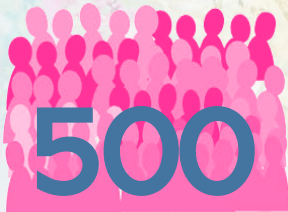
- Created a short film depicting hate crime and hate incidents to help people understand the jargon around reporting crimes.
- Published a simple online form for people to report directly to Amina rather than making an official complaint through the Police.
- Captured the lived experience and perspective of around 70 Muslim women through consultations on hate crime legislation.

Building Bridges

The Building Bridges project aimed to support intergenerational Muslim and Minority Ethnic women to improve their skills, become more confident in participating in their communities, and facilitate support groups and activities for women experiencing social isolation through drama, creative arts, and information sessions on women's rights and entitlements.

This project was funded for 2 years, and came to an end in November 2017, though we secured further funding early 2018 to develop the project as a 'phase 2', whereby the women take the lead in organising and delivering sessions.

From April to November we had the highest numbers of participation within any 6 month period for a project, and this was reflective of how successful the project was. This was the first project that Amina MWRC predominantly used WhatsApp to communicate



**participants
attended
25 sessions**

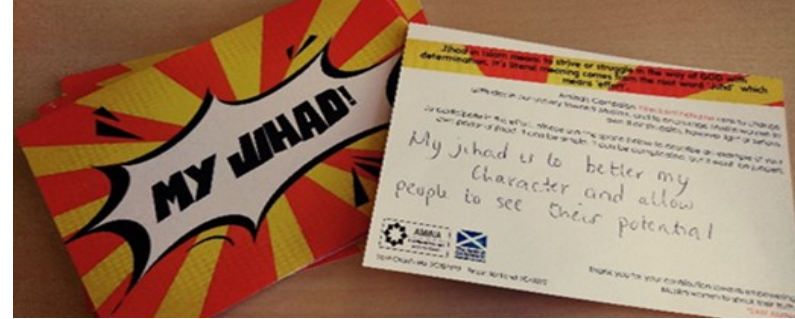
with 150 women who were regularly informed of weekly sessions. Though predominantly Arab, the overall group was made up of ethnically diverse women, including Pakistani, Bangladeshi and White. 80% reported they met new people they previously didn't know or connect with, and 100% reported that overall, they felt less isolated than before the project began.

We supported an overwhelming number of women to regularly take part in activities, including in the design, development and delivery of activities. Sessions included storytelling, presentation skills, self-care, swimming, mindful art, educational discussions about taboos such as sex education and trips.

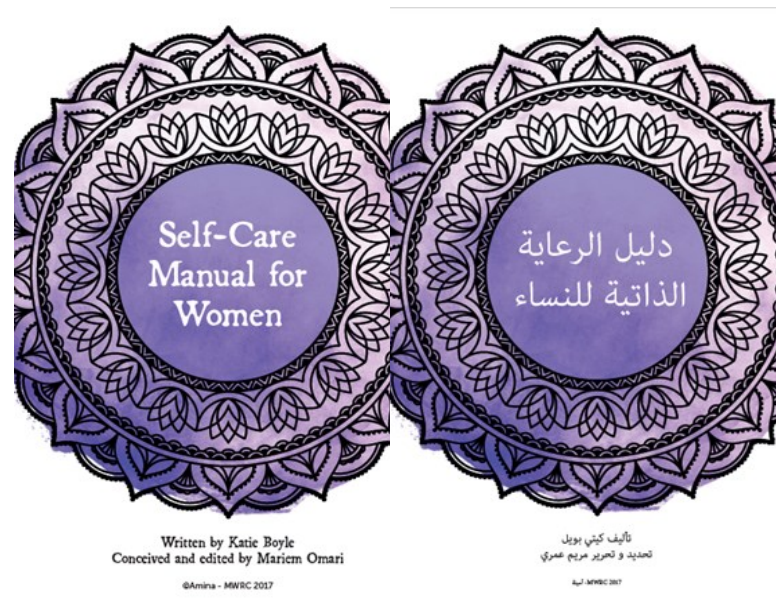
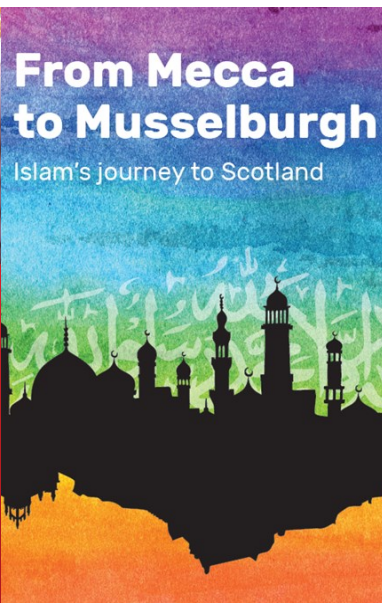
The end of project survey in November 2017, found that 78% of participants felt like they had gained new skills as a direct result of participating on this project.

“Building Bridges helped me to meet more people – people with different backgrounds from my own with different ideas, stories, priorities, beliefs and cultures. It gave me a chance to share my own culture.”

-Participant



Top from left: Women in the Enterprise programme at the *Taste of Amina* catering event (p.18); A filled-in 'My Jihad' card under the #ReclaimTheName campaign (p. 4); **Bottom from left:** Illustration from My Big Beating Voice (VAWG, p. 13); Covers of the Employability Toolkit (p. 15).



Top from left: Graphic illustration from the 'Challenging Perceptions' workshop under Employability (p. 15); Speaker at an *I Speak for Myself* event (Campaigns, p. 3). **Bottom from left:** Teacher's Toolkit cover and inside page (Schools project, p. 3); Self-Care manual, launched in multiple languages (VAWG, p. 13)

Befriending

The befriending service aims to reduce social and emotional isolation of Muslim and Minority Ethnic women, aged 50 years and over in Dundee. Through our work at Amina MWRC, it's recognised many women in this age range often face complex and multiple barriers to full and active participation in society. The project provides reliable information, which allows women to make informed choices in relation to their health and well-being, and furthermore increase their networks.

Through a variety of health and recreational based workshops and activities, we worked intensively with over 35 women. This year women chose to focus on

mental health. In partnership with the Mental Health Service User Network, women participated in a range of activities such as storytelling, relaxation therapies, mindfulness, Tai-Chi and visits to community gardens. This was in addition to the regular lunch club, one to one and group befriending support sessions.

This year marked the end of the 3-year project. We brought together 25 befriendees with a graphic artist to record the impact this project has had on their lives. 100% reported feeling more confident; 90% less isolated and feeling more resilient. More than three quarters of the women had made new friend(s).

“ We have become our own group and will continue to meet for yoga and lunch.

It's a relief not to feel trapped in the house.

The skills classes were really useful. I learnt to send emails and I can now keep in touch with more people.

”

Volunteers

We had 51 amazing volunteers join project teams ranging from 16 years to 70 years old, bringing with them a burst of energy, time and commitment! Amina MWRC has attracted volunteers in Dundee, Glasgow, Edinburgh and surrounding areas across Scotland.

Our volunteers are the lifeline and at the forefront of everything we do. This year they have participated in events, filming, raising awareness of key issues, academic research, delivering training, delivered ESOL classes, raising the profile of Amina MWRC,

“
I have gained a lot of new skills that I will take away and use throughout my life.

-Jahanara (Edinburgh)

I really feel proud of myself when I realise that my hard work helped a service user secure a place at University.”

-Ayah (Dundee)

fundraising, supporting clients and lots more! Occasionally our volunteers have progressed onto further education, employment and other volunteering opportunities.

Annually we organise a volunteer appreciation event, and this year it was team lunches in Dundee, Glasgow and Edinburgh. A big thank you to all of our wonderful volunteers, who are the driving force of all we do at Amina MWRC. We could not function without their relentless support.

“
I have made wonderful contacts, learned new skills, and opened opportunities for collaborating.”

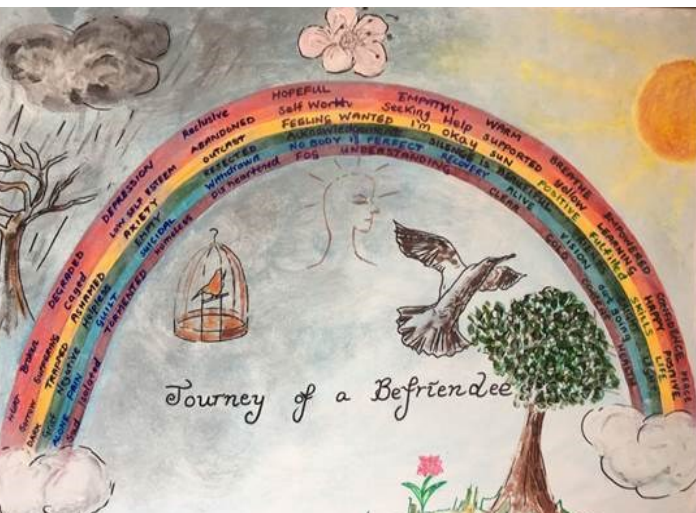
-Razan (Edinburgh)

75%

of volunteers reported an increase in feeling able to achieve their ambitions and improve their quality of life.



Top from left: Collaborative work from 'Equality in the Home and Equality on the Streets' training (VAWG, p. 5); A woman making art in a Skills Development workshop during the Women's Friendship Group (p. 14). **Bottom from left:** Feminism: Muslim Perspectives event on International Women's Day (VAWG, p. 5); A volunteer with a staff member at 'Volunteer Appreciation Day' in Dundee, (p. 10).



Top from left: Building Bridges participants (p.13); 'Best of Men' workshop (VAWG, p. 6). **Bottom from left:** Drawing *Journey of a Befriender*, made by Shazia Nadeem (Telephone Befriending, p.3); Glasgow Volunteers Appreciation Lunch (p. 10).

Violence Against Women & Girls (VAWG)

Self-care workshops

We ran a two day workshop in Aberdeen for young Muslim women who recently settled in Scotland from Syria (New Scots). Some of these women were facing several challenges while integrating into High School, as well as carrying past experiences of violence and trauma. The young women greatly benefitted from the self-care strategies and the discussions surrounding self-esteem. Similar workshops were delivered to women at Dumfries and Galloway Multicultural Association; Dundee, in partnership with Amina MWRC Sabbayah group, as part of the Dundee Women's Festival and in Edinburgh. Issues related to VAWG were weaved through these workshops. We were also very excited this year to launch a new multi-lingual self-care manual for women on World Relaxation Day.

'Equality in the Home and Equality on the Streets' training

We have been very busy this year delivering VAWG training to a diverse range of agencies including:

- Dundee City Council employees, Dundee University

(in partnership with Dundee International Women's Centre)

- Guidance teachers from Edinburgh City Council (in partnership with Saheliya and Shakti)
- Dundee Women's Aid
- British Red Cross
- Inverness Mosque

The training provides an overview of the dynamics behind VAWG, how VAWG issues affect Muslim and Minority Ethnic communities and what agencies can do to make sure their services accommodate **all** women.

Training has also been delivered to Muslim and Minority Ethnic women across Scotland with the aim of informing women of their rights, healthy relationships and domestic abuse. Our staff and volunteers who work in Dundee, Glasgow and Edinburgh, have attended these training sessions as well.

Feminism: Muslim Perspectives

To mark International Women's Day, Amina MWRC, in partnership with Glasgow University Muslim Students Association, were delighted to host a thought provoking discussion exploring Feminism and Muslim women.

'Best of Men' workshops

We were proactive in reaching communities in remote areas of Scotland to deliver our 'Best of Men' workshops. Not only were there thought-provoking discussions exploring women's rights in Islam, there was also a commitment to working with mosques to campaign to end violence against women.

The workshops were facilitated by Shaykh Hassan Rabbani and were held in Aberdeen, the Borders, Inverness, Dundee and Glasgow. With over 100 men participating in the workshops, this year has seen the highest engagement yet.

You Can Change This

Our campaign is in the form of blogs, short films, social media activism; our preventative work including our 'Best of Men' workshops and our trainings delivered to agencies and Muslim and Minority Ethnic women across Scotland, carry the same message: every single person can play an active role in ending

violence against women around the world: *You Can Change This*.

We also screened our short film 'Hopscotch', exploring street harassment from Muslim and Minority Ethnic perspectives, in venues across Scotland such as Edinburgh City Chambers, Aberdeen University, The Film House as part of Dundee Women's Festival, and others.

My Big Beating Voice

The exhibition 'My Big Beating Voice: Art, Suffrage and the Politics of being a Girl of Colour' celebrated the voices of young Muslim and Minority Ethnic women, as part of a joint project run by Amina MWRC and Edinburgh Rape Crisis Centre. The exhibition was launched in Edinburgh and ran over a period of 6 days, there was also a launch in Glasgow and Dundee. We were honoured to have MSPs and Councillors visit the exhibition, and look forward to it travelling around Scotland soon.

*“Very interesting, informative, challenging and inspiring.
Great opportunity to have Muslim women define feminism.*

Very empowering. Really reassured me that is okay to be a feminist and should be proud to be one.

-Feminism: Muslim Perspectives Participants

Employability

The 'Inspiring Aspirations' Employability Project has had another action packed year! This year, we were able to offer a range of support to unemployed and economically inactive Muslim and Minority Ethnic women across Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow and in partnership with PKAVS in Perth.

Engaging and empowering 332 women, the project offered personalised support, group activities, workshops and events with the aim of making paid employment, self-employment, voluntary work, further education and training opportunities more accessible and sustainable.

The project has continued to work with a range of partners, as well as forging new relationships.

In 2017-2018 we worked with: The University of Edinburgh, Worker's Educational Association (WEA), Santander, Gilded Lily, Skills Development Scotland, Dundee City Council, NHS Tayside, Debenhams, and BBC Scotland to name but a few.

"I am looking at myself in a different way, before I thought I was useless because I was just a mum.

This course make me believe in myself because you believed in me and encouraged me to be better and better.



76 clients progressed to paid employment, volunteering, further education or the establishment of their own enterprise.



80 women reported improved English language ability as a result of 129 hours of English conversation classes.



98 women engaged directly with employers and have a better understanding of recruitment processes.

'Shape your Future' Event

The project held its first ever event targeting young female Muslim and Minority Ethnic students, graduates and those in the early stages of their career to coincide with the 'Year of Young People 2018'. Held in Glasgow, the event provided a platform for young people to showcase their ideas and voice their opinions on issues that affect their lives and career choices. Featuring guest speakers Linda Salms, Samina Ansari, Raisah Ahmed and Talat Yaqoob, as well as local poets, the event was very well received.

Challenging Perceptions' National Employability Conference

Our annual agency conference, held in Dundee, featured James Fergusson, author of *Al-Britannia, A Journey Through Muslim Britain*, Rana Abu-Mounes, director of Al Mushkah and 'conversation couches' featuring our service users. The whole event was captured by graphic facilitators. 83% of delegates surveyed confirmed improved awareness of barriers for Muslim women.

“ *I feel as if I can achieve what I want in my life and career.*
–'Shape Your Future' Attendee

Amina MWRC is much more than an organisation to me and it is hard to put into words how much it has helped me. It has helped me discover so many things about myself and has helped me on the journey towards finding a job.

*I think I am lucky to have a chance to know about Amina MWRC.
I cannot imagine that without Amina MWRC I would have had my job today.*

–Employability Participants **”**

Enterprise



The 'Empowerment via Enterprise' Project has had a great first year in Dundee. We had a successful project launch in September and since then have completed a health and wellbeing enterprise block and a catering enterprise block. The health and wellbeing block included workshops facilitated by Gilded Lily, a social enterprise based in Glasgow that allowed the women to make their own mineral makeup. The ladies were then able to sell the makeup at an event which gave them insight into the marketing and selling process of setting up an enterprise. The catering enterprise block allowed the women to learn how to scale up their cooking and cater for different dietary requirements in preparation of them starting their own catering businesses. The final block finished in May, and was based around hand crafts. It showed the women how to create and cost handmade goods that they could sell in markets or online. We have also offered a shorter condensed version of the enterprise programme in Edinburgh.

The project has formed a range of partnerships, building off past collaborations and meeting new contacts through various networking activities. This year we worked with the Dundee and Angus College, Incubator, Gilded Lily, RBS, Dundee City Council Ezone, Ruzbowl, Dundee Contemporary Arts and Tayside Contracts.

'Taste of Amina' catering event

The 'Taste of Amina' event we put on for the Dundee Women's Festival for International Women's Day was a highlight both for our women and the staff team. We had 9 women cooking under the supervision of Kawther, an ex-Amina MWRC volunteer who has started her own catering social enterprise in Glasgow. Our ladies cooked for and served 13 members of the public, cooking a starter: vegetable fritters, a main; either Mediterranean chicken tray bake or dhal curry and a chocolate almond cake for dessert. It was an exhilarating experience for the women and helped them get a sense of what it was like to work in a catering/ customer service environment.

20 women engaged with the programme between September and March

4 clients established their own business



Refugee Support

The refugee support project has been running in Dundee since the first Syrian refugees arrived through the Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme in December 2015. Since then, the scheme has expanded to include the Vulnerable Children's Relocation Scheme which has seen the arrival of other vulnerable children and families from the wider Middle East region.

This service meets the families when they arrive at the airport and is the main point of contact for the refugees and all the agencies working to support them. We work very closely with Dundee City Council, housing associations, the NHS and many other local and national projects to ensure the refugees are empowered to become independent and achieving members of the community. With new intakes every quarter, we always have new families to assist and we see the progress that previous arrivals have made. Recently we have seen several get into

employment and gain confidence in English language. One has recently been offered a place at university having had assistance from our team. The refugee support team is composed of fluent Arabic and Kurdish speakers which means we can support the refugees in their mother tongue. Certain stages of the integration process can be very difficult and emotional, especially when their families are still being affected by war so it is a relief for them to express themselves freely and be understood.

Besides assisting the refugees themselves we also are often required to represent them at public events and to share our knowledge and expertise of both Middle Eastern culture and the trauma that often accompanies the refugee experience. Amina MWRC has established itself as a key actor in the field of refugee integration locally and nationally and it is a privilege to be part of the VPR and VCR schemes.

“They showed us the road and helped us find our way in a new country step by step.

I am a student and they helped me to apply for university which is the most difficult thing, even in your native language. I am so grateful I now have a place at university in Scotland!”

Women's Friendship Group

The Women's Friendship Group (WFG) is a social network where Muslim and Minority Ethnic women exchange ideas, have interesting discussions, and join in social events with their group.

Amina's WFG provides an opportunity to make new friends, encourages exploring broader interests, and participation in a variety of activities. The sessions have proven to help women grow their knowledge and confidence in English and feel more socially supported.

Involvement in activities, including the creative arts are all in a safe and supportive environment, and can provide participants relief from their often chaotic lives.

The group meets bi-monthly in Glasgow and Edinburgh. This year 41 women regularly took part in trips and outdoor activities, and participants decided amongst themselves to explore topics of concern to them such as mental health and wellbeing, self-care, relaxation, sewing, arts and crafts, cancer awareness.

“*Friendship is good for your health.*

This group has given me motivation and a feeling of accomplishment.”

-Women's Friendship Group Participants

Board of Directors

Raisah Ahmed — *Chair*

Asma Abdallah — *Treasurer*

Fariha Thomas

Aziza Khand — *Vice Chair*

Jamilah Hassan Adewunmi

Robina Khan — *Secretary*

Safeena Rashid

Acknowledgements

We would like to give thanks to the following donors for their support.



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FOUNDATION



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Other Donors:

We would like to also acknowledge Scottish Sadaqa Charitable Trust and Over To You for their funding; and the individuals who have kindly donated, helping us to continue supporting many more service users. Thank you.

Support us

Amina MWRC is largely project based; as such we are not funded to help in ways which fall outside of our funding outcomes. In order to carry on our legacy of supporting the most vulnerable Muslim and Minority Ethnic women in Scotland we rely on donations; even small amounts can change a woman's life.

We recognise that not everyone is in a position to donate financially; we welcome donations of services in kind, tea bags and biscuits that help us create a warm and welcoming environment for each of our visitors and even sanitary items to support destitute women experiencing period poverty.

Our community fundraisers join us in our fundraising efforts; this year our fundraisers ranged from ages 2 to 72! From bake sales and short sponsored walks to zip slides and skydives there is something for you, however bold you are feeling.

For more information on ways to support us, visit our website.

You can donate by:

- ◆ **Using the donate button on our website**
- ◆ **Sending a cheque to us made payable to Amina—the Muslim Women's Resource Centre**
- ◆ **Standing order**
- ◆ **Payroll Giving**
- ◆ **Signing up to websites like "Give as you live" and "Amazon Smile"**

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