



**AMINA**  
The Muslim Women's  
Resource Centre



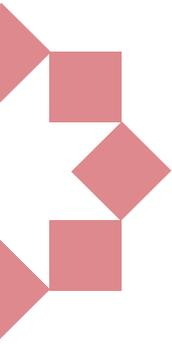
# INCLUSION at Grassroots

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Impact Report

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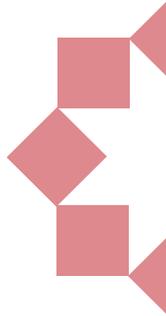




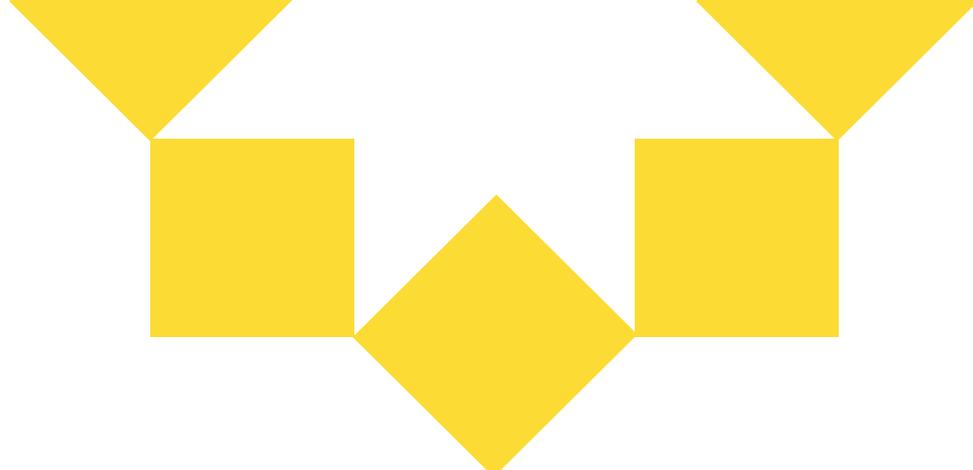
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“

*Amina taught me to never  
let the status quo persist.  
Stand up against it.*

- Amina Service User

”

# About Amina MWRC

Amina - the Muslim Women's Resource Centre (MWRC) is Scotland's leading women's rights organisation for Muslim & Minority Ethnic (MME) women.



## Our Vision

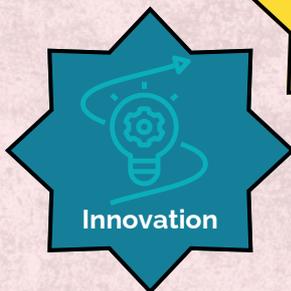
Amina MWRC envisions a world where Muslim & Minority Ethnic women fulfil their aspirations.

## Our Mission



To empower Muslim & Minority Ethnic women in Scotland through awareness, advocacy & community engagement.

## Core Values



Amina makes an invaluable contribution to the well-being of Muslim & Minority Ethnic women in Scotland. This research emphasises the vital nature of our work.

## Amina's Four Key Projects

### Helpline & Befriending

-  Our free & confidential Helpline is delivered by experienced staff and volunteers in various languages through email, phone and live chat on our website.
-  Telephone Befriending is available to women who experience or are at risk of domestic abuse, social isolation and those struggling with their mental health.
-  Sahara Scotland Domestic Abuse Advocacy service is delivered by our team of Independent Domestic Abuse Advocacy (IDAA) caseworkers.
-  The Alima advice service from our female scholar runs weekly, helping Muslim women better understand their Islamic rights.
-  Our Legal Immigration Clinic helps women with insecure immigration status and No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF).

### Employability, Adult Learning & Financial Advocacy

Amina MWRC offers employability services to address the unique and intersectional needs of Muslim & Minority Ethnic women, helping them upskill and contribute to Scotland's workforce.

-  Personalised 1-1 employability appointments for CV writing, job applications, confidence and interview preparation.
-  Online ESOL classes for women to improve their English language skills.
-  Adult Learning through free courses provided by educational institutions to improve employability skills.
-  Financial Advocacy to help women understand their financial rights, access the Amina Hardship Fund and assist women in applying for benefits, grants and white goods.



## Violence Against Women & Girls

Our ending Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) team aims to address gender inequality and discriminatory structures in Muslim & Minority Ethnic communities. The project raises awareness by encouraging dialogue and community engagement to address harmful norms. Our initiatives include:

-  Awareness workshops to educate women on well-being, healthy relationships and gender-based violence.
-  Ending VAWG campaigns to address harmful societal norms which are overlooked in communities, including in-law abuse, intergenerational trauma and unhealthy habits.
-  Development programmes which help MME women become positive role models and leaders in the community.
-  Training programmes for organisations to improve inclusion through addressing discrimination on the basis of gender, ethnicity and religion.

## Creative Well-Being

Our Creative Well-Being project enhances the integration of Muslim & Minority Ethnic women in society by providing safe spaces to learn, create and build social connections.

In partnership with external organisations, we deliver weekly workshops in Dundee and Glasgow, promoting the women's creativity, confidence and well-being. Our activities are women-led and tailored to meet their needs. The four strands are:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
|  Health and Well-Being |  Arts and Culture   |
|  Skill Sharing         |  Outdoor Activities |

# Report Overview

This report highlights the critical role of research in shaping the development of Amina MWRC as an organisation, particularly in capturing the experiences of MME women in Scotland.

To gain insight into the experiences presented in this report, we spoke with 180 Muslim and Minority Ethnic women across Scotland, including service users, staff, volunteers and trustees. Their perspectives help to provide a comprehensive overview of Amina MWRC's impact and its key role within the women's sector in Scotland.



24  
9

Interviews with service users

Interviews with staff & board members

32 Service users participated in focus groups



115 Service users participated in the survey

**180**  
participants





The report emphasises the importance of moving beyond simply listening to Muslim and Minority Ethnic women, to **actively creating and sustaining structures** which address both their immediate and long-term needs. It highlights the financial disparities and challenges within structured funding, exposing the difficulties faced by smaller, and particularly “by and for” lived experience, organisations like Amina MWRC.

While acknowledging the undeniable value of lived experience, this research moves further beyond this singular presentation, **incorporating staff and stakeholders' perspectives** to showcase practical development and address under-representation in mainstream organisations.

It is crucial to highlight our successes and advocate for the **need to strategically support Amina in positive change** at the grassroots level. Our research identified four recurring strengths of Amina MWRC noted by our services users. A strong sense of loyalty to the Amina “family” was also stated as a great asset to Amina MWRC.

### Our Strengths Include

Effective  
Collaborations

Community  
Connections

Client-Centred  
Approach

Positive  
Organisational  
Culture

Our **limitations** include funding constraints, operational challenges in income generation and accessibility issues for service users. These hinder our ability to provide responsive services, emphasising the need for sustained financial support and improved accessibility measures. Staff turnover and workload concerns highlight the critical role funding plays in maintaining a robust and impactful organisation.

Muslim and Minority Ethnic women face a higher likelihood of experiencing challenges like domestic abuse, immigration issues, financial dependency and childcare concerns. Thus, **the need for collaboration across the third sector** is instrumental in service users receiving the best support possible.

## Key Findings from this Research

### Suggestions for Service Improvements

- Enhanced accessibility
- Better childcare facilities
- Clear timelines for follow-ups
- Access to events beyond clients' cities
- Conscious engagement with diverse communities
- Organised trips
- Regular courses
- A Dundee office
- Additional voluntary opportunities
- More 1-1 sessions

### Clients' Hopes for Future Funding

- Digital skills
- Physical health activities
- Self-development sessions
- Volunteering opportunities
- Muslim-focused sessions
- Tiered employability support for all skills & experience levels to progress and develop their careers, including for women already in work
- Sessions to support parents & guardians in having conversations with young people
- Co-creating syllabus for Upward to ensure that all sessions from external partners are focused on the needs of the group
- Interpreting services
- Language cafés
- Intergenerational learning spaces
- Wider advertising campaigns



## Governance Improvements

- Mentoring for board members
- Streamlined policy reviews
- Supporting Amina into a position similar to other organisations in the women's sector
- Measuring long-term organisational effectiveness
- Clear outline for roles & expectations
- Uniform employee management & support for all staff, including those based outside Glasgow

## Amina's Potential Influence on Government Policies

- Protecting female-only spaces
- Enhancing "by and for" representation
- Advocating for specific needs of Muslim and Minority Ethnic women
- Addressing the cost of living crisis, particularly for asylum seekers

## How Amina's Work Impacts Women

- Improving mental health
- Offering a safe space
- Fostering connections
- Meeting diverse needs
- Boosting confidence
- Empowering women
- Facilitating access to mainstream services
- Enabling self-exploration & development
- Addressing the importance of faith-based opportunities
- Providing faith and culturally sensitive support for domestic abuse & sexual violence

## Challenges Faced by Our Service Users

- Socio-economic and language barriers
- Cultural barriers
- Islamophobia and racism
- Perpetuation of violence
- Negative media representation affecting access to mainstream services

## Structural Inequalities Experienced by Our Staff

- Scrutiny from beneficiaries and the wider community
- Overwork
- Vicarious trauma

Our online survey exposed women's multifaceted engagement with Amina, suggesting the necessity for our **"one-stop shop" approach** to service provision.

The testimonials in this report show the holistic significance of our work in the lives of Muslim and Minority Ethnic women in Scotland. Their words affirm Amina MWRC as a vital source of rejuvenation, empowerment, friendship and hope, one whose potential loss would resonate deeply across various aspects of their well-being and community connections.

Recognising the broader impact on mental health, social isolation and identity, this research urges government bodies, funders and service providers to adopt an intersectional approach to address the root causes of inequalities faced by MME women in Scotland.

# Introduction

Amina MWRC makes a unique impact for Muslim and Minority Ethnic women in Scotland. Our success highlights the need for continued sustainable funding beyond organisational growth. Impactful change and improvements for many of the marginalised women we support occur at a grassroots level.

A clear finding from this research is that Amina's work is unique, irreplaceable and specialised, making it difficult to replicate in any setting which is not dedicated to meeting the needs of Muslim and Minority Ethnic women in Scotland.

Our projects and work streams are tailored to meet the distinctive needs of our women. Our provision of services is sensitive to the cultural and religious requirements of our service users and a key factor in Amina's continued success. This strategy serves as our unique selling point, distinguishing Amina MWRC from other women's rights organisations in Scotland.

We respond to the needs of a cross-section of Scottish society which is underserved in mainstream services. Amina is at the forefront of supporting and uplifting Muslim and Minority Ethnic women.



## Amina's Culturally & Religiously Sensitive Approach

### Skills Development

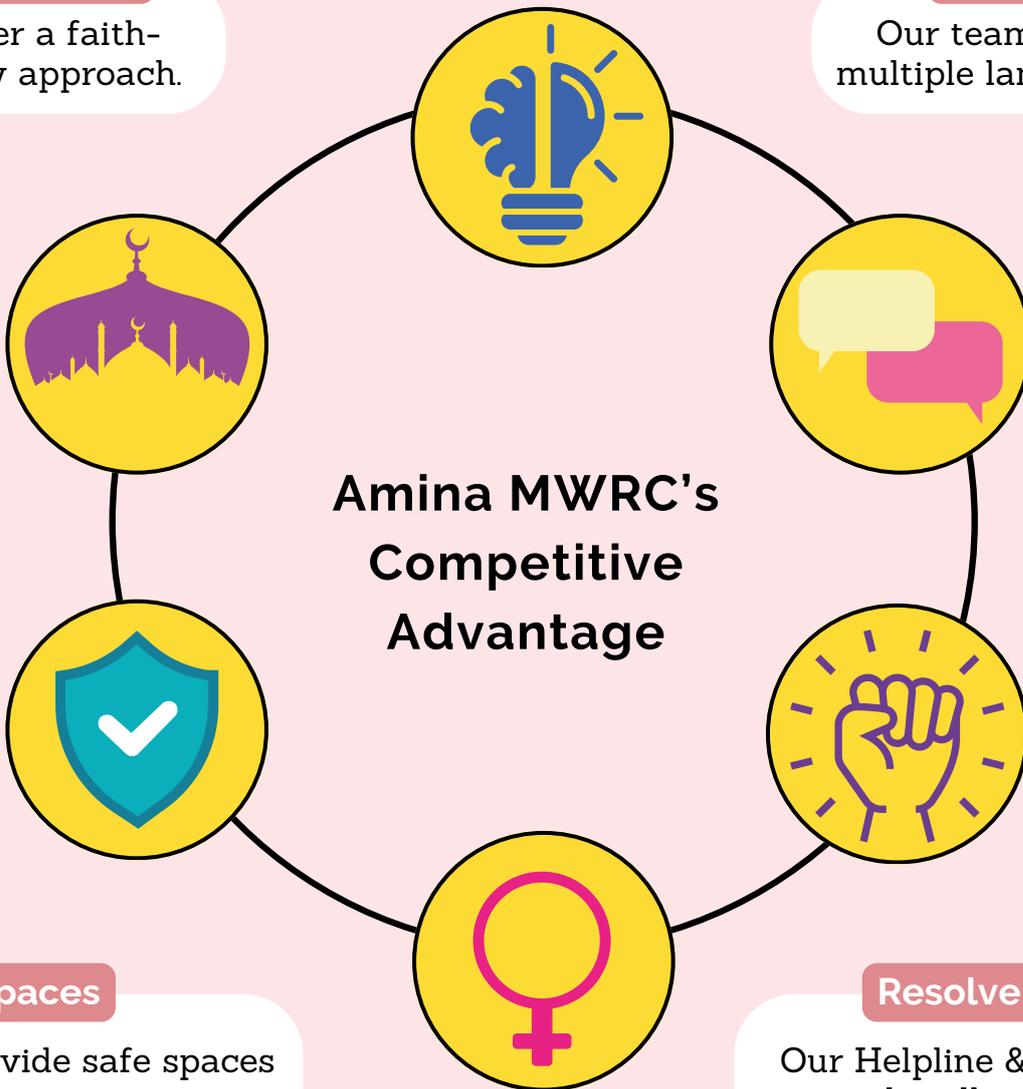
Amina helps women develop new skills and gain new experiences.

### Faith-Friendly

We offer a faith-friendly approach.

### Languages

Our team speaks multiple languages.



### Safe Spaces

We provide safe spaces for women to report racism, Islamophobia and domestic abuse.

### Resolve Issues

Our Helpline & VAWG teams handle, navigate and resolve conflict in a directed manner.

### Intersectionality

We use an intersectional approach to address religion, race, gender and ethnicity.



Amina team members serve as changemakers and advocates for Muslim and Minority Ethnic women, by influencing change at multiple points in policy- and decision-making processes. While reporting on lived experiences allows us to amplify voices, this in itself is not enough.

It is crucial to expand towards an approach dedicated to creating and sustaining structures which respond to the immediate and long-term needs of Muslim and Minority Ethnic women in Scotland.





# Findings

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## i. A Demographic Picture

This section provides a demographic overview of the service users who engaged with our research through 1-1 interviews, focus groups and the online survey. The demographic data this research captured has some distinctions which are important to highlight.

**1** Amina utilises **multiple approaches in service delivery** to cater for a wide range of women. As an example, **older women were found to prefer in-person events over online ones**. They demonstrated more complex needs regarding health, mobility and language. In particular, Amina's work with older women in Dundee testifies to how well Amina adapts to meet service users' specific needs.

**2** **Muslim & Minority Ethnic women over the age of 16 were more likely to be married than the overall population.** 50% of interview respondents and 55% of survey respondents listed themselves as married, a higher rate than Scotland's Census 2022, which recorded 45% of women living in Scotland as married or in a registered civil partnership. Respondents' risks in terms of domestic violence, precarious immigration status and lack of financial independence followed this trend and were more prevalent than in the overall population.



3

Although the majority of respondents were Muslim or Christian, **service users who were Hindu, Sikh and those of no faith** also commonly benefit from Amina MWRC's events and services. Many respondents from various backgrounds highlighted their highly positive experiences with Amina's staff and organisational culture.

4

**Word of mouth is the most prevalent method of advertising Amina's services.** However, survey responses showed a high rate of clients searching and finding information independently. Trust is built more quickly and smoothly through word of mouth, as opposed to other forms of marketing. However, responses highlight that awareness of our services is often limited to the first point of contact. Some women reported that they were not aware of Amina's full fleet of services despite regularly interacting with one service. This presents an opportunity for a strategic shift in advertising and information sharing across service users for all projects.

## ii. Why Women Use Amina

Amina's unique **organisational culture** has had a profound impact on its clients, providing a safe and welcoming space where women understand one's needs and opportunities. These needs may be inaccessible elsewhere, which is why women turn to Amina MWRC.

### A “One-Stop Shop”

Amina MWRC offers a **one-stop shop** for service users who can potentially access all four strands of our work. This is illustrated by the figure on the following page, which shows the route taken by “Zara” (a pseudonym) upon her referral to Amina for support with domestic abuse.

Zara was first referred to the **Sahara Scotland Domestic Abuse Advocacy** service for tailored casework support. Amina's caseworkers further directed her to our **Financial Advocate**, who helped her to claim benefits and resolve her money-related issues.

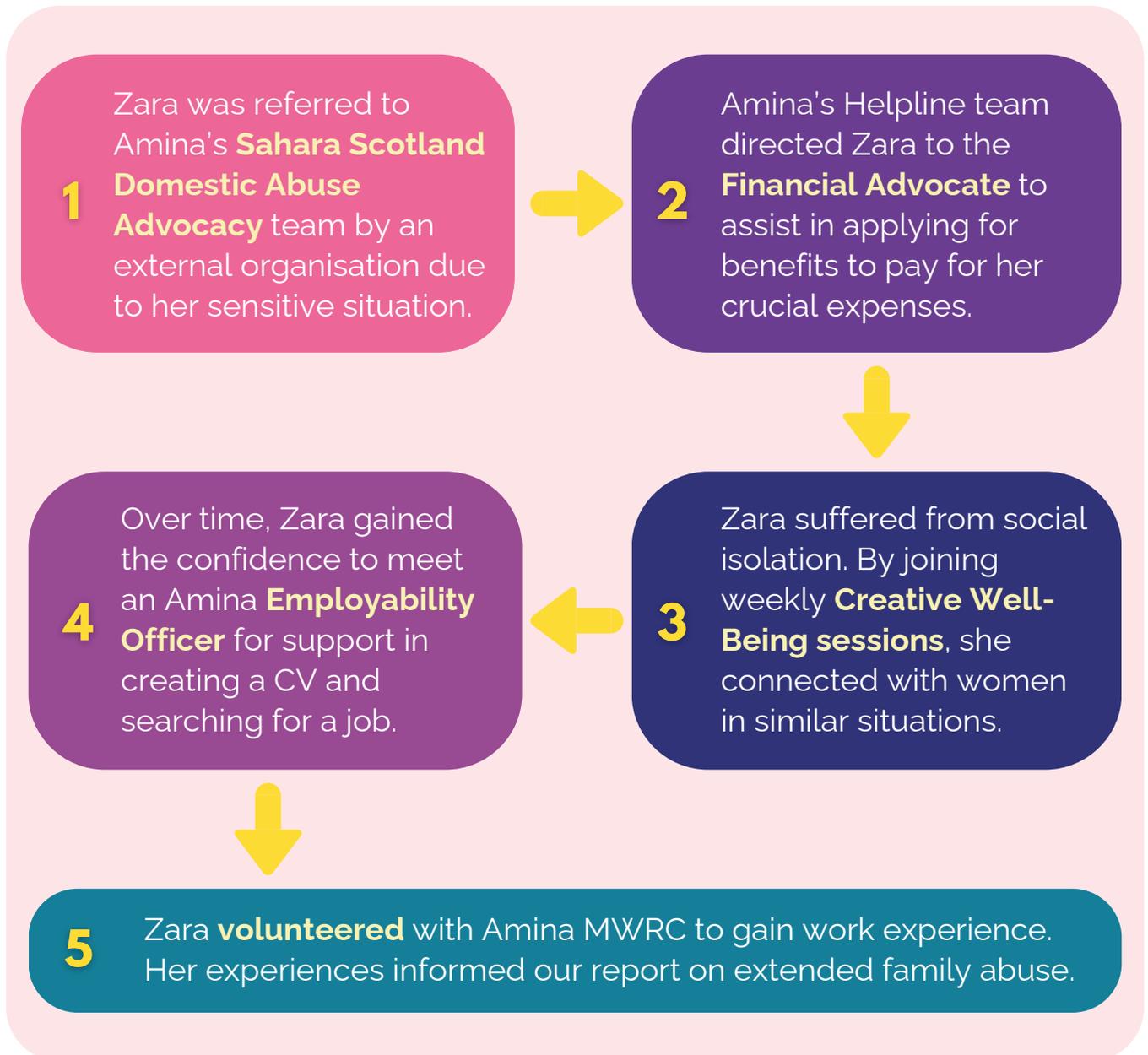
Throughout this time, Zara felt isolated and craved connection within the community. This need motivated her to join the **Women's Friendship Group** in Glasgow. Had she been based in Dundee, she would have had the opportunity to join the weekly Creative Well-Being group.

Over time, Zara developed the interest and courage to upskill and enter the job market. Amina's **Employability** service supported this journey.





## Holistic Support Diagram



### iii. Challenges for MME Women in Scotland

Muslim and Minority Ethnic women continue to face well-documented barriers, from socio-economic inequalities to language and cultural differences. These factors shape and often intensify the challenges our service users have shared with us.

**Visibly Muslim women face intersectional challenges due to the triple threat of Islamophobia, racism and sexism.**

Muslim women in Scotland are **more likely to experience Islamophobia than men**, with three quarters of them reporting experiences of Islamophobia [Hopkins, 2023; Ganesh & Abou-Atta, 2016]. This reality is compounded by the high levels of both systemic and interpersonal racism experienced by Minority Ethnic women in their access to and the delivery of mainstream services such as health [Mental Health Foundation, 2020]; employment [Close the Gap, 2019]; and education [Riaz, 2023; Equalities and Human Rights Commission, 2019].

Negative media representations of Muslims, in particular Muslim women [Centre for Media Monitoring, 2018], and the post-9/11 narrative built around “radicalisation” have worsened women’s experiences of Islamophobia and racism [Choudhury & Fenwick, 2011]. These factors have detrimentally impacted women’s feelings of safety and security in public spaces [Asad & Uddin, 2022].

**The unique ways in which MME women experience domestic abuse is the reason why Amina is so essential for its service users [Choudhury, 2023; Hulley et al., 2023].**

Researchers argue that these women need support systems which account for and understand their faith [Choudhury & Winder, 2022]. Chowdhury’s 2023 framework demonstrated how faith affects domestic abuse in Muslim communities.



Amina MWRC's own 2023 report, **Sabr, Silence and Struggles: Extended Family Abuse in Muslim & BME Communities in Scotland**, reflects these findings, highlighting how domestic abuse often involves extended family.

This impact report provides a rallying call for individuals and organisations to recognise that the very foundation on which Muslim and Minority Ethnic women stand has a different and distinct terrain.

When viewed as part of a broader perspective, it is widely accepted that these issues have had a negative impact on individual mental health, social isolation, sense of belonging and identity in Scotland.

The scarcity of representation of Muslim & Minority Ethnic women in decision-making positions within organisations adds to a lack of understanding and responsiveness required to address these challenges at the root. It is therefore important that **government bodies, funders and service providers adopt an intersectional approach** as a holistic practice to begin to address inequalities and barriers MME women face in Scotland.

### Challenges Experienced by Amina MWRC's Service Users

This research finds that the key challenges faced by Amina MWRC's service users fall under four broad categories: Support, Self-Development, Inclusion and Physical Accessibility

#### 1. Support

Lack of support stems from weak social systems and institutions, disadvantaging marginalised groups.

- Raising children without a support network
- Victim blaming
- Isolation & loneliness
- Cost of living crisis
- Immigration

## 2. Self-Development

Service users highlighted self-development as crucial, especially when managing family duties, facing changes or struggling with access issues.

- Lacking skills for employability
- Lack of confidence
- Identity crises

## 3. Inclusion

The drawback of focusing only on the majority (white) versus the minority (MME) overlooks the challenges faced by mixed communities who often feel lumped together.

- Intra-community racism
- Feeling unsafe
- Having a space which addresses needs
- A lack of understanding of civic & legal systems
- Lack of knowledge or awareness of available services

## 4. Physical Accessibility

Women reflected on various barriers, particularly physical ones, which disproportionately affect marginalised groups which are often excluded from consultations.

- Lack of time or opportunity for new experiences
- Language barriers
- Difficulty with travel
- Health challenges



#### iv. Amina's Impact for MME Women

The heart of this research has been to understand the impact Amina MWRC has had on Muslim and Minority Ethnic women. This section of the report highlights the impact of each individual project.

##### Helpline and Befriending

“

*I'm so lucky I got in touch with Amina's Helpline and started getting the Befriending service. The Helpline supported me and my mental health and now I feel like a lot has changed in my health and life. I feel better and confident in myself. After receiving support from your Helpline, I no longer want to leave my life. I also started to speak with my GP doctor. I feel now that I'm starting my new life. That's very important for me because I was totally disappointed with my life.*

- Service User

”

The Amina **Helpline & Befriending** team forms the core resource providing Amina with strategic information on trends, needs and issues for Muslim & Minority Ethnic women in Scotland.

Our Helpline is the primary point of contact for our service users. In 2022-2023 around **2,500 women accessed the Helpline**. The Helpline remains our largest and most recognisable service and perhaps the most impactful. It provides a range of services online and in person, as outlined on the following page.



## Helpline & Befriending



**Helpline & Live Chat**



**Alima Service**

Female Islamic Scholar



**Telephone Befriending**



**Immigration Law Clinic**

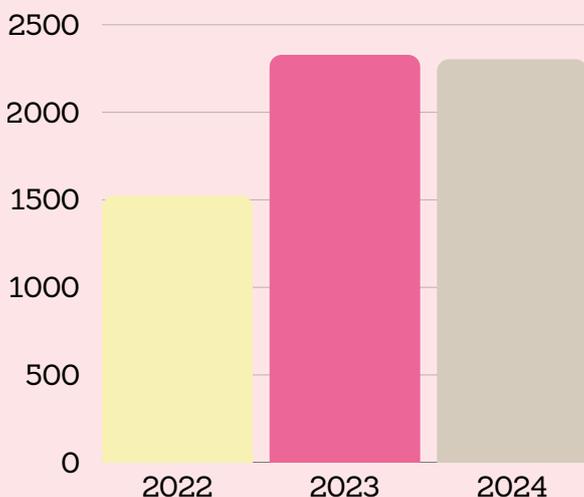


**Sahara Scotland**

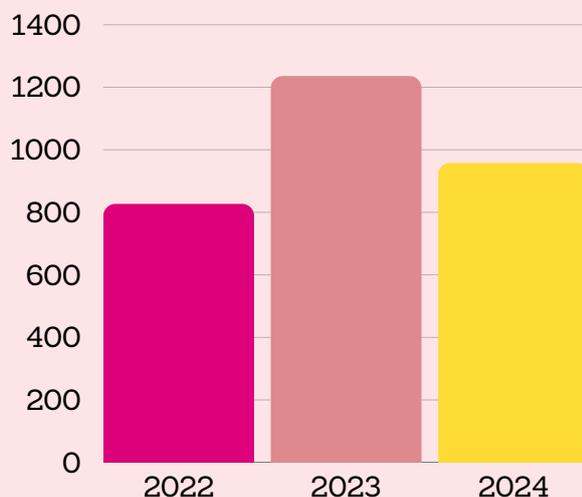
Domestic Abuse Advocacy

Being a **third-party reporting service**, our Helpline demonstrates the substantial impact that it has on producing tailored and need-based services directly informed by lived experience for Muslim and Minority Ethnic women. The Amina Helpline also encompasses our telephone Befriending service for vulnerable women, Sahara Scotland Domestic Abuse Advocacy and additional specialist telephone services.

**Total Helpline Calls**



**Clients on the Helpline**



Case Studies 1 and 2 highlight instances where our Helpline and Hardship Fund have helped Muslim & Minority Ethnic who were in dire need.



## CASE STUDY 1

### Financial Support in Homelessness



Natasha was made **homeless by her abusive husband** and required extensive support from Amina's Sahara Scotland team to secure safe accommodation, set up a bank account and apply for Universal Credit.

Natasha and her children were forced out of their home without any prior warning and abandoned with very few belongings. During the immediate period of crisis, Amina was able to support her with **£200 to cover essentials**, in addition to waiting for the outcome of other funding options until she could apply for an advance on her Universal Credit.



Natasha was put in a very difficult situation and could not have managed the challenging time without **essential support from our Helpline team and Hardship Fund**.



## CASE STUDY 2

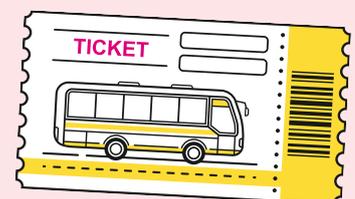
### Support Through Loss of All Finances



Tanya was staying at a Women's Aid Refuge. Her Support Worker contacted our Helpline after Tanya's **Universal Credit was sanctioned**. She had run out of money and was no longer able to afford to attend college, purchase her own bus ticket, or even buy herself food.

Tanya was able to secure £100 of the Hardship Fund to cover her **essential costs for a week** until her Universal Credit sanction lifted.

Without the Hardship Fund, Tanya's life would have severely been disrupted. **Amina's support allowed her to continue to live her life despite her dire circumstance.**



# KEY MILESTONE

# Accreditation & 20-Year Aminaversary

2024 marked a number of milestones for our Helpline & Befriending team. Amina MWRC celebrated twenty years of our Helpline at our Aminaversary in November 2024.



We were also delighted to receive the **Helplines Standard Accreditation** 2024 - 2027 through the Helplines Partnership, which testifies to the exceptional level of service delivered by our team each and every day.

**Helplines  
Standard**  
2024-2027



**The Helplines accreditation highlights our service as meeting the highest standards for helpline services.**



### Sahara Scotland Domestic Abuse Advocacy

“

When I first joined, our CEO recognised that the Helpline team was doing casework but weren't recognised for it; it was just seen as the Helpline. The CEO applied for funding and it expanded from there. She went on to apply for Independent Domestic Abuse Advocacy (IDAA) training, so we have been qualified and trained as domestic abuse advocates. With the rate at which it has grown, we separated our casework from the Helpline as Sahara Scotland, giving it its own much needed recognition.

- Staff Member

”

**Sahara Scotland**, launched in 2023, marked the formal progression of Amina from being a signposting organisation to **providing independent domestic abuse advocacy** directly. Sahara Scotland makes a profound positive impact for MME women in Scotland every day.



799

clients supported from September 2024 to August 2025 by Amina's Sahara Scotland



46

calls regarding the Hardship Fund in 2024

### Common Helpline Issues in 2025



1 Domestic Abuse



2 Relationship Issues



3 Mental Health

## Testimonial

**SAHARA SCOTLAND**

*I have been getting support from Amina for almost two years now as a victim of domestic abuse. I was assigned one of their domestic abuse caseworkers, who has supported me and continues to support me during this difficult journey of keeping myself and my daughter safe through court proceedings.*

*I just wanted to take this opportunity to first of all thank Amina as an organisation for providing me with a platform to access the support I needed at the darkest days of my life. I came to you when I was absolutely broken beyond belief, scared and utterly lost.*

*I cannot commend your organisation enough for its work and efforts in providing women like me with support in their time of need. Women like me who are vulnerable and desperate for advice, help and someone to listen to them and guide them.*

*I cannot begin to explain how she [the caseworker] has helped me, guided me and given me the emotional support I needed. She gave me strength to carry on and believe in myself again, to pick up the pieces and start to mend myself. I would not have been able to put things into place to keep myself and my daughter safe. She provides me with so much relief and I pray that God rewards her for going above and beyond with her clients.*

*Her genuine care, professionalism and support on all levels is a credit to her and your organisation.*



## Ending Violence Against Women and Girls



Amina's **Ending Violence Against Women & Girls** (VAWG) programme paves the way as a changemaker in preventative work that challenges gender inequality, as well as factors which cause VAWG.

Our Unspoken and Healthy Relationship workshops help to address taboo issues in Muslim and Minority Ethnic communities, such as porn addiction, divorce, narcissism and honour-based abuse. Our sessions increase the awareness and understanding of these crucial topics, which are often neglected and deemed too difficult to approach in a community setting.

### Ending VAWG



**Training**



**Upward**

Young Women on the Rise



**Campaigns**



**Unspoken**

Sessions on taboo topics



**Workshops**

on Healthy Relationships

## Upward Programme

### Young Women on the Rise

Our youth programme Upward: Young Women on the Rise provided young Muslim & Minority Ethnic women with insight into the women's sector and ending violence against women issues. Our 2022 and 2023 cohorts engaged with a number of organisations including Scottish Government, Rape Crisis Scotland and EmilyTest.

The Upward Programme's impact on young women has been transformational. Women who have completed the programme have gone on to:

-  apply for jobs, apprenticeships & work experience, securing roles at organisations including the BBC, Scottish Parliament, Glasgow Women's Library and Amina MWRC
-  actively contribute to focus groups and consultations, helping to shape Amina's work and influence wider policy
-  take part in Amina-led events & workshops
-  write blogs for Amina focusing on ending VAWG
-  complete Helpline training to become call handlers
-  volunteer with Amina MWRC

“

*The Upward team and the group of girls you spend all this time with provide you with an outlet for unpacking these community traumas in a way that we can all heal together and try to find a way forward. Young women, especially when you put us together, can be such a powerful force for good. Amina taught me to never let the status quo persist. Stand up against it.*

- Service User

”

## SPOTLIGHT CAMPAIGN

**EXPOSED**

**Exposed**, our spotlight campaign for 2025, focused on intimate image abuse in Muslim & Minority Ethnic communities. In partnership with **Revenge Porn Helpline** and **Report Harmful Content**, our digital campaign highlighted the impact of intimate image abuse that current legislation does not address.

For Muslim and Minority Ethnic women, private or intimate images which they would not want shared publicly could include:



Photos without hijab if worn publicly



Images indicating a relationship outside of marriage



Wearing private home attire, revealing arms, legs or neck

Although such images are not protected under intimate image abuse legislation, our **Exposed** campaign highlighted the impact of the misuse of such images on the lives of Muslim & Minority Ethnic women. The resources which we published help to highlight the support that is available to victims of such forms of abuse.

YouTube Short Film

Our short film explores cases of abuse in MME communities.

Exposed Resources

Our website resources highlight pathways to support for victims.

Interactive Cases

Our website cases highlight the consequences of abuse.

Since 2019, the Ending VAWG project has trained over 1000 people across various organisations including SAY Women, Rape Crisis Scotland, Zero Tolerance and the North Lanarkshire Council. Our beneficiaries also include educational institutes such as the University of Dundee, University of Strathclyde, and the University of the West of Scotland.

Our most popular training is **Accessing Support: Challenges Faced by Muslim & BME Women**, which focuses on the triple threat of Islamophobia, sexism and racism, and how this affects women's ability to access services. The high demand for this training conveys how little is understood about the challenges that Muslim & Minority Ethnic women face, while demonstrating the effectiveness of this training in increasing knowledge and tools for practitioners.

### Other Training Delivered

-  Forms of Gender-Based Violence
-  Supporting Survivors: Trauma-Informed Practice
-  Hate Crime Train the Trainer
-  Intersectionality in Recruitment
-  Closed Doors: How to Safety Plan with South Asian Women
-  Retention to Culturally & Religiously Sensitive Bereavement Training

The impact of Amina's preventative work is imperative, empowering and effective in giving women the tools to recognise, understand and challenge abusive ideas and practices, as highlighted in the quotations below, collected from women who have attended our VAWG events.



## Ending VAWG Project Client Feedback

### **I am enough in myself.**

I deserve to live in a safe environment, like anyone else. Amina made me feel more confident and vocal about my life, and the barriers around me - sexism, misogyny, patriarchy, conditioning, racism, ableism, gaslighting, invalidation. I am stronger than my hostile environment.

Visiting the Scottish Parliament and meeting BME politicians during Upward showed me politicians are people like me.

### **I can take part in change making.**

### **I learnt that people in abusive relationships can be of all ages,**

not just older people which is what I thought before. I've learnt that it is imperative to look out for friends and make sure to use your voice when you see something wrong.

### **It will impact my future so now I know what to look out for in terms of searching for a spouse when that time comes.**

I know what type of man I would want to avoid and how to help anyone who is suffering through this and pointing it out for other people as well.

## Employability & Adult Learning

“

*I used to feel like an outsider because I wasn't able to speak English or relate to the culture. Sometimes I would even wonder what I'm doing here. ESOL helped me learn English and gave me practice for real life. I finally feel like I belong.*

- Service User

”

**Amina's Employability Project**, ESOL and ICT classes address a broad range of intersecting needs experienced by MME women. Learning English is a powerful tool that improves life for women who use Amina's services. Often, this leads to them applying to jobs, assisting them in alleviating poverty and building the foundation of **financial independence**.

“

*My experience has been very good. The teacher-led class is excellent, and I understand everything with the teacher's support. I'm very thankful to Amina for offering this course, it's so important for me. I've been in Scotland for four years and, as a mother, I want to be able to speak English with my son's teacher. This course has been really good for me.*

- Service User

”

Our team works directly with partners and funders to deliver Adult Learning sessions, planned according to the needs of our service users. 1-1 employability support is available by appointment in Glasgow, whilst our employability workshops are held across Scotland.





## Employability & Adult Learning



Employability  
1-1 Support



Employability  
Workshops



Adult Learning  
Courses

### Financial Advocacy

“

*With the clients I support, it's rarely a single issue. For instance, they may initially approach me for help in completing an application, but once a bond of trust with Amina is established, they reach out again for further assistance. There's almost always the need for ongoing, additional support. I might help with benefits at first, and then, weeks later, they may return seeking guidance on applying for child maintenance. The support we provide is multi-layered and often continuous.*

- Staff Member

”

Amina's **Financial Advocate** provides financial support and advice to all MME women, and acts as an advocate for women in conversations with essential agencies, such as local authorities and energy providers.

The most vital impact of the project is in supporting women to access and manage their financial affairs, while crucially empowering women to understand their financial rights.

83

clients  
supported

107

financial advocacy  
calls in 2024

“

*I often hear from women who've been living in hotels for months. They tell me their children aren't eating properly; they are struggling financially, and have no money. They express frustration that the Home Office has not rehoused them in any suitable accommodation and face uncertainty about what will happen next. Many women are facing a wide range of complex challenges.*

**- Staff Member**

”

Financial Advocacy acts as an **acute source of support** for women with NRPF, new arrivals to Scotland and asylum seekers who have been unable to obtain support elsewhere, in addition to those living with the long-term effects of domestic violence.



### CASE STUDY 3

#### Navigating Finances Through Bereavement



Sara, an Amina client facing isolation and loneliness was benefitting from our Befriending service when her husband passed from a chronic health condition.

After his passing, Sara felt emotionally distressed and struggled to access her finances. Amina supported Sara with £50 to cover her immediate groceries and food needs, with the potential to increase this in case she was still unable to gain access to her bank account.

The issue was promptly resolved; Sara regained access to her bank account and no longer required financial assistance.

Amina continued to support Sara with Bereavement Support for the months that followed to ensure she felt empowered and secure enough to control of her own finances.





This service has created the **opportunity for signposting** to other organisations who work with MME women, yet struggle to support their specific needs. The quotations from service users below provide further insight into the diverse needs and lived experience of those seeking financial advocacy.

*'We want real people to speak to about our problems. Getting advice online can be difficult and overwhelming so I was grateful for in-person appointments. When someone is supportive, approachable and understanding of cultural background, it helps put you at ease.'*

*'My ex-husband was financially well-off and my in-laws did not let me know about support - it was all hidden from me. It was Amina that helped me to get benefits when I was in need. I really appreciate what Amina is doing for families.'*

*'When your situation changes and you must start from scratch, you need someone to help you find the way and support you. Thank you for being that support for me.'*

*'The first time I heard about Scottish Child Payment was from Amina's Financial Advocate. It felt like a bonus, since I know about Child Benefit, but not Scottish Child Payment. It's a shame they don't backdate because I didn't know about it for a long time, and my children and I missed out when we needed it.'*



# PARTNERSHIPS

Our Employability and Adult Learning team has formed a number of key partnerships in recent years which allow us to better deliver our services for Muslim & Minority Ethnic women in Scotland.

## Make Your Mark in Volunteering Partnership



As a member organisation of Make Your Mark, Amina MWRC has helped Muslim & Minority Ethnic women engage in nature-based volunteering.

## Glasgow Ethnic Minority Service (GEMS) Consortium



Amina MWRC is a member of the GEMS consortium, led by the Bridges Programme and funded by Glasgow City Council on behalf of Glasgow Local Employability Partnership (LEP). GEMS aims to address the employability needs of diverse groups in Glasgow through 1-1 employability support and workshops.

## Glasgow Clyde College Adult Learning Courses

Through our valuable partnership with Glasgow Clyde College, we are able to deliver free, accredited ICT courses at our office in Glasgow. These qualifications are invaluable to women who are job hunting.





## Creative Well-Being

“

*The social side of having a Creative Well-Being space is that it is open to everybody because it ticks a box for everybody. The tapestry group morphed into its own little group; it has been very powerful for the BME community to be part of, and for the group to represent themselves at the V&A.*

**- Staff Member**

”

Amina's **Creative Well-Being** project offers a safe space for women to learn, create and connect.

The impact of Amina's Creative Well-Being programme based in Dundee, and **Women's Friendship Group** in Glasgow is deep and meaningful for the women participating. The essential human need to connect with others is fulfilled through creative learning, an approach which has built confidence and improved the overall mental health of the women who join these opportunities. Women are further able to use their newly learnt skills and confidence by volunteering at Amina and other organisations.

“

*Through Creative Well-Being, I met a wonderful sister who completely understood my experiences, thoughts, and feelings as a revert struggling to integrate. She listened to me attentively, and it felt like a breath of fresh air; for the first time in a long while, I did not feel alone. Through this group, I found someone who could truly relate to my unique experiences. She also helped me overcome language and cultural barriers with other Muslim women.*

**- Service User**

”

## Creative Well-Being



**Arts &  
Culture**



**Health &  
Well-Being**



**Outdoor  
Activities**



**Skill  
Sharing**

Through skill sharing, our women are encouraged to share their skills with others, and supported in delivering sessions to the other women. The impact of this is layered; improvements in confidence, skill recognition and development, financial recognition, leadership and teaching skills are some of the positive ways in which women have been impacted.

*'I enjoy flower arrangements and Amina's Creative Well-Being team provided the opportunity to share my skills with other women. Although I did not charge anyone for sessions, the Amina team covered the cost of the flowers and materials used. The feedback I received from the group was very positive and they were very enthusiastic in participating. It was very encouraging for me and I feel confident to teach other people.'*

*'In my experience, the Creative Well-Being sessions helped me connect with my inner self, as I enjoy doing many crafts. The Amina team and other group members encouraged me to take part. Over time, I started to really enjoy it and I now love having this space to share my talents and teach others what I'm passionate about.'*



Case Study 4 below highlights the story of Iqra, a service user for our Creative Well-Being programme, who used volunteering and skill sharing to build her skills, self-confidence and experience.



## CASE STUDY 4

### Self-Confidence & Employability Skills



Iqra first joined Amina MWRC as a client interested in participating in the weekly Creative Well-being sessions to help her **build her confidence** and improve interactions with others. Iqra had struggled with social anxiety for as long as she could remember, with this peaking during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Iqra took the initiative by participating in every activity that was on. She also adopted a more supportive role within the sessions, showcasing and sharing her own skills with the rest of the class. Iqra was soon approached for **volunteering**, which helped to further improve her confidence.

Through these experiences, Iqra grew more committed and began to run her group activities independently with staff members in the background to support her. This was evident of Iqra's progression, by starting as an attendee and **building the confidence to volunteer and run sessions independently.**

Since her involvement in Creative Well-Being, Iqra has been able to recognise and appreciate her skills better. She has also regained self-confidence in applying for jobs. Iqra's work experience with Amina will be highly beneficial for her when she requires a reference that highlights her commitment and quick progression within her current role.



## v. The Heart of Amina: Our Volunteers

“

*Volunteering at Amina is a place where women can feel empowered to go on a self-development journey. With encouraging words from their peers, they can achieve what might have felt impossible. Being a volunteer can have endless opportunities at Amina. Support is ongoing and there is always training available.*

**- Staff Member**

”

Our volunteers form the heart of Amina MWRC, helping it flourish and make change every day. We welcome and train volunteers who are interested in upskilling and gaining work experience by being part of our Helpline & Befriending, Creative Well-Being and Digital Media teams.

The extensive skill development and support for the women who volunteer with us, coupled with a culturally and linguistically sensitive work environment, provide the ideal space for women to thrive and succeed.

Amina's volunteers have taken the initiative to organise and take part in fundraising activities to raise funds for the organisation. In recent years, these have included bake sales, walks and taking part in the Kiltwalk.

“

*I love the work I do - it has been a privilege working with such amazing women. Volunteering at Amina gave me the chance to believe in myself. It finally gave me a place to be who I wanted to be, rather than be who I needed to be at home, and I was able to improve my IT skills!*

**- Amina Volunteer**

”

The long-term impact of our volunteering programme shines through two of our volunteers' journeys.



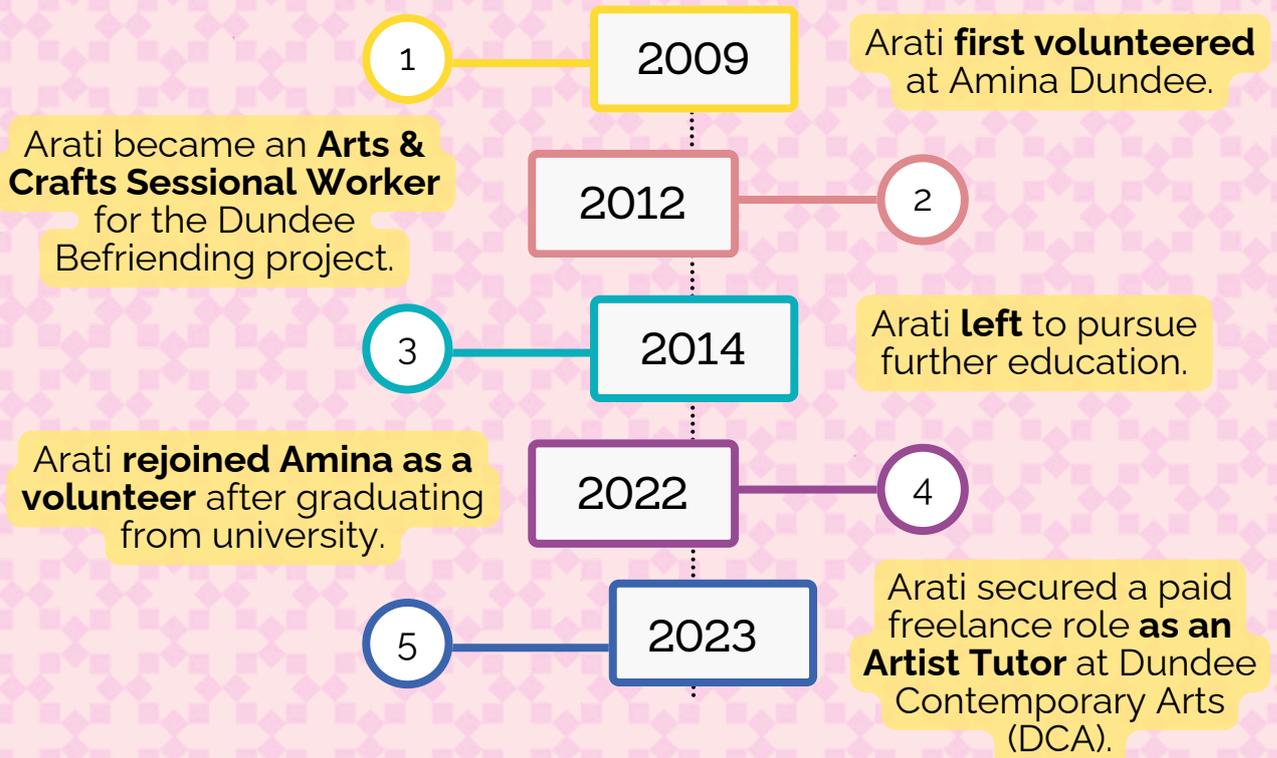
## Volunteering Journey - Arati Ahmed (Dundee)



**Arati Ahmed**  
Creative Well-Being  
Volunteer

### Key Achievements

- ❁ Delivered 4 quilting workshops
- ❁ Oversaw & contributed to the Dundee Tapestry Project
- ❁ Helps to execute the weekly Creative Well-Being sessions



“ Volunteering with Amina has been pivotal to my life. After I graduated, I faced some health problems which took a lot of my confidence away. Once I started volunteering I found purpose, and my confidence returned. I secured employment at DCA and utilising my degree has been an amazing achievement. I'm truly grateful to Amina MWRC for providing a safe platform to get involved at my own pace. ”



## Volunteering Journey - Rahila Waheed (Glasgow)

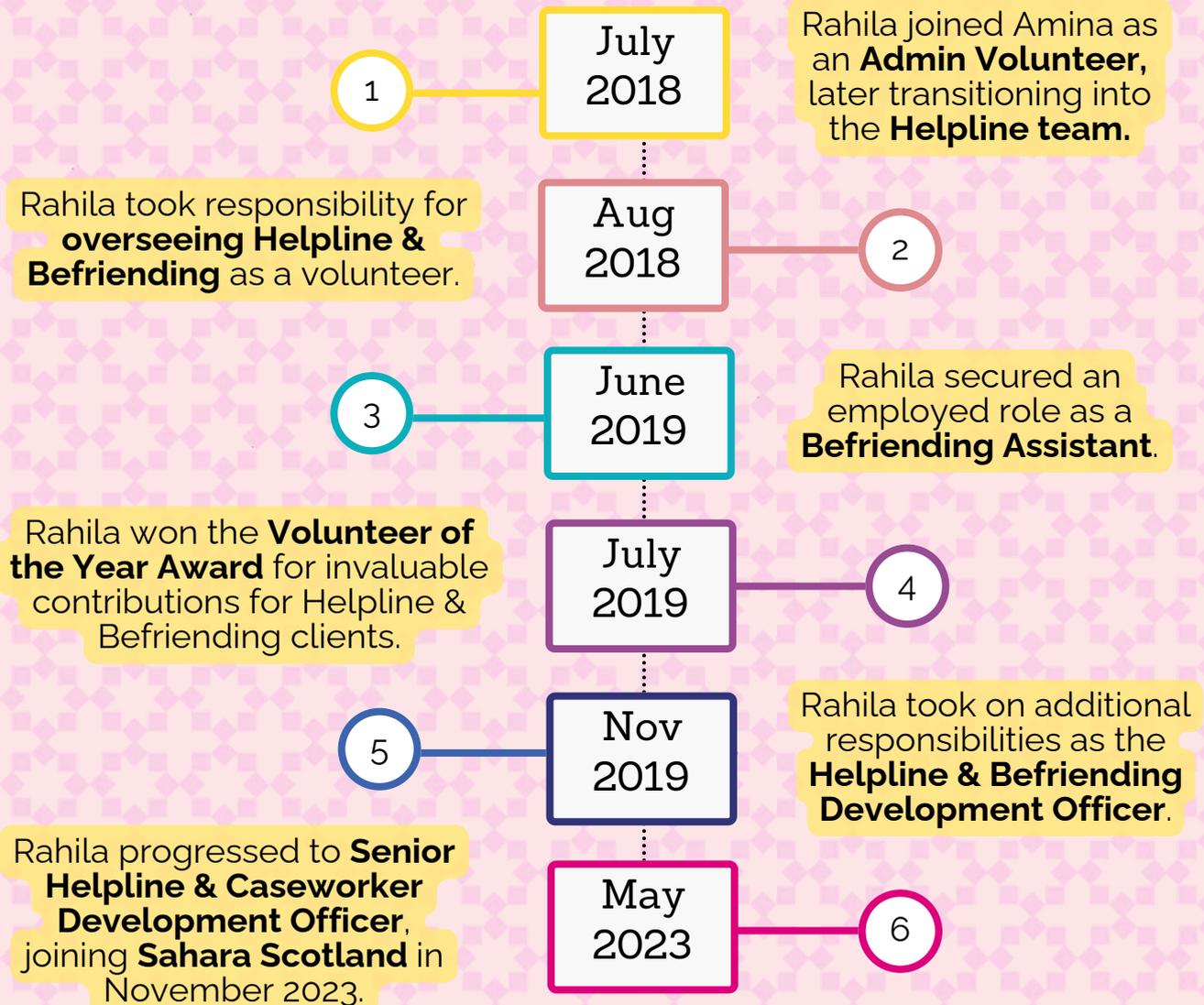


### Rahila Waheed

Senior Helpline & Caseworker  
Development Officer

#### Key Achievements

- Completed IDAA Domestic Abuse Training
- Facilitated Helpline evolution from signposting to a comprehensive support network
- Personal & professional growth, working closely under Shazia Nadeem





# volunteer-led FUNDRAISING

Amina MWRC's volunteers take the initiative to raise funds supporting for our strides forward for Muslim & Minority Ethnic women. Some recent volunteer-led fundraising activities are outlined below.



## Sweet Steps for Hayley



In August 2025, our incredible Helpline volunteer Hayley took on the week-long challenge to walk 100 miles in the Kintyre Way to raise funds for Amina. The campaign was led by Hayley & our volunteers, with a bake sale in aid of her journey held beforehand!



## Kiltwalk

Volunteers regularly take part in the annual Kiltwalk for Amina. Our volunteers and service users train with Creative Well-Being's walking group to prepare for the feat!

17

volunteers  
trained in  
2023

37

volunteers trained  
in 2025

# How has the **SUPPORT** you received at Amina impacted your life?

Women who have engaged with Amina speak powerfully about the difference our work, services and staff have made in their lives. This section presents their voices directly, highlighting how the support they received has impacted their lives.

*It needs to be as visible as the NHS is. Everyone knows that the UK has a well-functioning NHS. So I feel everyone should also know that they have Amina that they can go to when something happens.*

## 1. Improvement in Mental Health

Women reported on the overwhelmingly positive impact which their engagement with Amina has had on their mental health.



*I would be in the hospital or dead if it was not for Amina.*

## 2. Finding Connections

Amina provides a vital sense of community and connection, particularly valued by Amina's service users who are from diverse backgrounds, ages and life circumstances. This creates a vibrant and enduring space for socialising and support.



*Being at Amina is like the olden times: a sense of community, gathering, togetherness and sharing meals.*



### 3. Access to Mainstream Services

Amina MWRC serves as a lifeline for Muslim and Minority Ethnic women, helping them access important services including the NHS and housing. We help to bridge any communication gaps, and cater to individual needs, ensuring that our clients get the support they need in tough times.



*Mainstream organisations [eg GP] were not helpful. People dismiss me . . . including counsellors.*

#### Staff Member Insights

*'Sometimes it is simply about having an open conversation, asking what support is needed and assessing how best to provide it. It is not complicated, but this is often where cultural and religious gaps can have a significant impact.'*

### 4. Self-Exploration & Development

Amina MWRC provides opportunities for many service users to learn essential new skills, such as learning English. The ability to speak and understand English is a gateway to other paths, including finding jobs, making friends and increasing independence in everyday tasks.



*I was a primary school teacher in China and now teach Mandarin here in the UK, including to many adults and children from Scotland. Having the opportunity to improve my English is important so I can clearly explain grammar and other language points to my students.*

*I started a placement at Amina. Childcare was taken care of and I was encouraged to apply for an admin position even with small kids. I learned on the job.*

*I came to Amina to share ideas and contribute.*

## 5. A Safe Space

The idea of a safe space is especially important for our service users. In the context of experiencing Islamophobia and racism in a variety of public spaces, gender-based violence at home or the feeling of alienation as a non-English speaker, Amina is a refuge.



*Knowing that this support is always available has been a great help and has significantly changed my mindset. There's no judgement, if I am not having a good day, I can simply say so. I am met with understanding; if I want to talk, someone is there to listen. If not, I am given the space I need.*

## 6. A Place That Meets Women's Needs

Amina provides Muslim and Minority Ethnic women with important opportunities such as single-gender physical activities like swimming and badminton classes; financial independence; and a space free of judgement. We help to bridge communication gaps and cater to individual needs, ensuring that women get the support they need during difficult times.



*They showed us how to set up and run a business from home.*



*A lot of people were involved with Amina and then left and came back when the activities suited their lives again.*

*There are no women-only spaces in gyms, so I have been able to get active again through Amina's activities.*

*I was stuck as to what to do now that I am retired.*

## 7. Empowerment

Empowerment for our service users could be something as simple as the ability to hop on a bus, or utilising their skills to “give back” to their community in a meaningful way. Women who successfully completed development programmes or achieved qualifications reported a shift in their sense of purpose; crucially, this was enabled by our staff through the provision of relevant opportunities, voluntary and paid.



*Creative Well-Being is a life-changing programme on so many levels. It has helped me understand myself and my strengths as a woman. For a long time I saw being a woman as a weakness. The programme allowed me to embrace my strengths while providing me with a space to freely be myself.*

*We believe in supporting other women-run businesses. For all events, we order food and decorations from small, local, women-run businesses.*

*I wouldn't have had the courage to apply to my current job. Thank you to Amina's Employability Officer for helping as I really would not have been able to do it myself.*

## 8. Confidence

Amina's services; its diverse skills development opportunities; social networking; and women-led initiatives, such as the Tapestry Project in Dundee, have significantly enhanced women's confidence levels, positively impacting their daily interactions within their civic circles.



*Cultural norms have long kept women at home, focused solely on family responsibilities. Men go outside to work and provide, while women are expected to stay at home to look after the family.*

*Women do not realise they can go outside for themselves. We see now that is changing. More women now recognise they have the right to step outside, engage with their communities, pursue education or work and live for themselves. This shift is making a real difference in their lives.*

*I feel like Amina's workshops have really increased my confidence with talking to different people and asking them questions. The latest session about talking about menstruation and spirituality, I would have found out that information a lot later in life than I did now. I am so thankful that I know it now. I feel more prepared.*

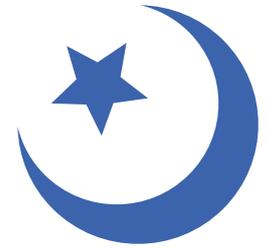
### Staff Member Insights

*'The Befriending service really helps women to work on the foundational aspects of their life - their character, their personality and their experiences. Confidence and self-esteem - people throw those phrases around, but the impact of having confidence, self-esteem and a strong sense of self is so important for a woman.'*



## 9. The Importance of Faith-Based Opportunities

The provision of services that offer a faith-sensitive environment has a positive impact on Muslim women. The Alima (female Islamic scholar) on the Helpline; women-only sports and physical activities; the provision of halal food; and a prayer space at events all aid in making opportunities and activities accessible for Muslim women.



Staff members and service users expressed a strong link between having the **freedom of practising their religion** in Amina's spaces, leading them to not only use our services, but often seek employment with us.



*I was ecstatic when I got the job, especially since it is a Muslim and Minority Ethnic-led organisation. At other organisations you are constantly having to explain yourself regarding your religion and fasting in Ramadan. There is so much flexibility at Amina - there is an understanding. I was so honoured when I got this job.*



*A hijab- and niqab-friendly social activity where I feel I can take off my hijab is my main concern when attending activities.*



*I am not wholeheartedly accepted by the Muslim community or my own general community because of my identity. As a revert, I feel like I am treated differently, but I feel accepted at Amina.*



### Staff Member Insights

*'We get calls from England - even international calls from women going through domestic abuse. They say they know we are in Scotland, but we have the religious understanding they need. The feedback we get is that there is no organisation like Amina where they live.'*

## If Amina lost its **FUNDING** what would this mean for you & your community?

We asked the women we spoke to what it would mean to lose Amina's services and how it may impact their lives. The women's responses were unanimous, as they stated that the loss of **Amina would feel like losing a home: a place of sanctuary, social and mental sustenance.** By losing Amina, they would lose a group of people and a space which provide them with rejuvenation, support, friendship and hope.

The impact of Amina MWRC on MME women in Scotland is significant, deep-rooted and holistic. In this section, we present powerful testimonies in the women's words, describing what a loss of Amina would mean for them.

*It would be a great loss . . . there are no words to express it.*

*I feel this would leave POC (people of colour) women at a disadvantage when it comes to explaining their personal situations.*

*It would be a huge loss for many communities as they will lose important links connecting them to knowledge, learning and making their lives easier.*

*Loss of social gatherings and loss of learning. Amina provides the ability for women to try out new and exciting activities which are sometimes beyond our own individual knowledge and reach.*

*I would campaign outside the Scottish Parliament and explain that Amina MWRC had in fact saved my life on a few occasions.*

*Families will lose their primary supporter and suffer for a decent living with the high cost of living. Students will not receive learning aids, and even communication with family and loved ones, and e-learning will be a problem because it has provided Internet service [data] segments before, and these are the simplest things.*

*It would impact my mental health. I enjoy interacting with native speaking teachers, I would lose my right to discuss my problems if a problem arises either at home or work or in the community.*

*I first used Amina 15 years ago when it was in Calder Street. I'll never forget how lonely I felt when I moved to the area. For me it was a lifeline and it still is...I have gained confidence, skills, knowledge, friends, and enjoyed and still enjoy the activities, and I'm sure all those ladies/women would probably feel the same.*

*Our community will lose a platform where women feel confident, empowered and included.*

*Amina has so much to offer - more and more people are using their service and finally feel they have a second home, a home where there's love, joy, support, empowering women, a place where their voices are heard, we are loved and we matter! So thank you to all those dedicated staff at Amina who make a difference in our lives. Long live Amina!*

*I will be all alone in Dundee.*

*It would be a huge loss - the positive impact is seen in how much WFG loves to come together and rely on the group to be involved in a community. It can be a lifeline and means to escape isolation.*

## vi. Amina's Impact on the Wider Community

Amina is a powerhouse among women's groups, run by and for Muslim & Minority Ethnic women. Our team members work diligently to make real change for these women in civic life.

### Driving Change: Shaping Legal and Policy Landscapes

Amina has been at the forefront of advocating for the rights of Muslim & Minority Ethnic women. This means speaking out against any unjust government policies, as well as advocating for new policies and changes in legislation to ensure fairness and equality for Muslim & Minority Ethnic women. Some instances of this advocacy include Amina's work on the Nationality and Borders Bill; its response to the Hate Crime and Public Order Bill; and its status as a Third Party Hate Crime Reporting Centre in Scotland.



### Spotlight Case

## FAWZIYAH JAVED

Fawziyah Javed from Leeds was on holiday in Edinburgh when she was pushed to her death from Arthur's Seat by her abusive husband.

Adding to the tragedy, she was pregnant at the time, a loss which further deepened her family members' understandable grief.

Fawziyah was a young and talented lawyer who was passionate about women's rights and volunteered for charities in her spare time. Her husband, Kashif Anwar, was found guilty and sentenced to at least 20 years in prison.





Amina MWRC was one of the women's rights organisations in attendance at the trial, and has actively supported Fawziyah's family. This case highlights the extent of the impact of our work, and the role that our staff play in supporting families.

In November 2024, Amina MWRC invited Yasmin Javed, Fawziyah's mother, to *Tell Her Story*, our partnership event with Glasgow Women's Library for 16 Days of Action. The event provided a platform to raise awareness of honour-based abuse, highlighting the detrimental impact that it has in society.



Amina MWRC's commitment to being at the forefront of raising awareness of honour-based abuse is both directed by and demonstrates our expert knowledge regarding domestic abuse and honour-based violence in Muslim & Minority Ethnic communities.



### Fostering Engagement with the Wider Community on Issues Affecting Muslim & Minority Ethnic Women

Our **You Can Change This** campaign work has been designed to reach across race, gender and age lines to raise awareness about and challenge violence against women and girls. Through a combination of exhibitions, short films and training, the impact of You Can Change This has reverberated beyond the Muslim community by talking about and raising awareness of issues which are largely unknown and misunderstood.



# let's get

# DIGITAL

Amina MWRC maintains a strong digital presence online across key social media platforms. Through an integrated marketing communications approach, Amina uses its website, email newsletter, blogs and social media accounts to raise awareness of key issues, our campaigns and to share public statements on events which impact Muslim & Minority Ethnic women in Scotland. These include:



Informative blogs with content derived from Amina events featuring experts on **Menopause**, **Menstrual Health**, **Intimacy & Healthy Relationships**



Blogs for Awareness Days like **World Hijab Day**, **International Women's Day**, and **Sexual Abuse Awareness Week**



Public statements on the ongoing situation in **Palestine**, **Islamophobia** in the UK and the **Rwanda Scheme**

## Our Digital Platforms



aminamwrc



aminamwrc



aminamwrc



mwrc.org.uk



Amina - the Muslim  
Women's Resource  
Centre



aminamwrc





## The Need for Collaboration

Collaborative working is an integral part of Amina's work to ensure we meet the intersectional needs of all the women who come through our doors. Whilst there are times this can be a source of increased workload, it is important to ensure that Muslim & Minority Ethnic women are fully supported.

The quotations below, collected from staff members, help to emphasise this need for collaboration.

*Collaboration is most impactful when it is guided by a clear and specific purpose, as this helps ensure everyone's strengths are maximised in supporting marginalised women.*

*Collaborative working brings opportunities as well as challenges. Often clients are referred to us because another organisation has done their best to support them but reached a natural limit. This gives us the chance to explore new solutions together, though it can sometimes mean managing expectations around the support we are able to provide.*

*Collaboration can sometimes be complex, especially when partners are still developing their understanding of the needs of Muslim and ME women. We welcome when organisations reach out to us for support, although our resources can often be limited due to capacity. That's why ongoing training and shared learning are so important. When it does come together, the results can be excellent, with stronger connections, effective referrals and meaningful signposting.*

## vii. A Development Perspective

Since 2019, the world has experienced a highly transformative period. In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, Amina's evolution has included several key highlights, including those outlined below.

### CLIENT-LED EVOLUTION

2 0 1 9 - 2 0 2 4



An exciting office move to the heart of Pollokshields



Adopting digital inclusion and online learning



Setting up Amina's Hardship Fund & Financial Advocacy



Formally launching Sahara Scotland casework service



A renewed focus on research & policy



Dundee office closure & new satellite base



Engaging younger 16 - 25 audiences through Upward



Achieving Helpline Accreditation & 20 years of service

Amina is based in Glasgow South West, the Westminster constituency with the highest percentage (14.3%) Muslim population in Scotland [Zayed, 2024]. For many, Amina's presence is a relief. However, the changing migrant and refugee populations in Glasgow and across Scotland have further stretched our resources, impacting the goal of service at a national level.

**Access to services and safe spaces remains a challenge for MME women, which should be a priority for development.**

Our research found that 50% of respondents cited a lack of services in their area and difficulty in travelling to access Amina MWRC in person. A 2022 report highlighted difficulties women face in digital inclusion, which will likely continue to negatively impact Amina's service users [Morere, 2022].



Amina's development has been impacted in ways that have both strengthened and weakened our ability to respond to the needs of service users. This section will explore the apparent strengths and limitations Amina faces as an organisation.

## Strengths

### Collaborations

-  Collaborative working affords a financially stable way of working
-  Resource sharing optimises outcomes for all service users
-  Collaborations encourage knowledge sharing to improve services and access to support

### Community Connections

-  Building trust is easier and more impactful
-  Governance is led by individuals who have direct experience with the communities Amina serves
-  The integration of staff's personal and professional lives enriches the quality of services provided

### Organisational Culture

-  Friendly and welcoming
-  Non-judgemental
-  Passionate and driven staff who go above and beyond for clients
-  Safeguarding client needs in collaborative initiatives while reducing the risk of financial and emotional exploitation

### A Client-Centred Approach

-  Service users are nourished holistically
-  Facilitating meaningful data gathering and improving services
-  Investing in staff qualifications and training to enhance their expertise and support formalised risk assessment and policy development

## Limitations

Staff and board members view funding challenges and limitations as major contributors towards pulling staff into a cycle of crisis approach, as opposed to long-term planning.

Quotations from staff members presented below highlight the key limitation, that of funding.

*It's always down to the money - how much you can do with what funding you have? How long do you have the funding? What are the restrictions of the funding?*

*When I came to Amina, I realised there's only one person behind these big projects that from the outside, looks like there is a massive team. You feel like you can't be sick or take annual leave because there is all this work to do, and clients you don't want to leave.*

## Key Areas Impacted by Lack of Funding

### 1-1 Support from Staff

Opportunities for 1-1 support or confidential spaces are difficult to obtain for many women using our services, reflected in requests for in-person befriending, and long waiting lists for our Employability services.

At present, we have made progress towards improving our 1-1 services by introducing our Sahara Scotland casework service and continuing to prioritise 1-1 employability support. Nevertheless, a lack of funding imposes limitations on staff time, safeguarding and space, restrictions noted by both staff and board as impediments to development in these areas.



## Responsiveness

External funding limits Amina's flexibility in adapting our services in response to community needs or requests. During one focus group, the women suggested developing volunteer-led befriending services, a repeat request from service users. This is not feasible without an increase in core costs to support volunteers, given Amina's duty to provide safe, regulated and trauma-informed practice.

**Staff turnover and salaries were reported as ongoing sources of stress** due to barriers in sustained funding. Board members highlighted this as a priority, as the quality of service delivered is wholly dependent on our staff. Our research found that recorded absences and resignations were attributed to staff burnout, due to high workload in relation to their capacity.

Flexibility in working hours and structure was reported as the main reason for staff retention at a management level. Balancing this with burnout will remain a challenge for Amina in the future.

Unpredictability around funding application outcomes often impacts Amina's forward planning and budgeting for services best aligned with our service users' current needs. In addition, the ongoing instability of short-term funding puts safe spaces for Muslim and Minority Ethnic women at continued risk of inequality, closure and uncertainty.

“

*A lot of this is run by charities, not by the state. And if those charities close, or have to really shrink their operations, what will that mean? How many more people will fall through these types of gaps?*

- Staff Member

”

Participants identified safety and kindness as qualities embedded in Amina's culture. As a result, clients are partial to forgiving shortcomings in service provision due to funding. However, shortcomings do exist, and it is crucial for Amina to continue strengthening its relationships with clients.

“

*I think Amina is doing a fantastic job in supporting those (MME) women, but I think it could be widened; the horizon should be widened more to meet specific needs of individuals.*

- Service User

”

## a note on **ACCESSIBILITY**

Our staff routinely receive referrals from mainstream organisations which lack expertise in dealing with MME clients. Most notably, this includes women who face language barriers. Interpretation and translation services are rarely included in running costs due to their ad hoc nature. It is essential to recognise accessibility as an ongoing cost that directly affects MME women's ability to utilise services.

It is crucial to acknowledge and cater for all forms of accessibility when taking responsibility as a service provider. Accessibility needs must be seen as core costs, rather than mere afterthoughts. Without adopting this approach, Muslim & Minority Ethnic women will continue to miss out on essential services. To make services more equitable, we must ensure genuine care and inclusion for all members of society.

“

*I don't like to say this, but it is ignorance. At times, other organisations will see a brown face and pass them on to Amina. They don't invest the time to train their staff to effectively help these women. The flip side is that there are women who come to us saying that they know other services exist, yet they would rather approach Amina for the cultural understanding and awareness.*

- Staff Member



## viii. A Focus on Structural Inequalities

**Amina is an organisation led by and for Muslim & Minority Ethnic women in Scotland.** Staff and board members who engaged in this research reported structural inequalities which exist as a result of being “by and for”.

### Under Scrutiny

Several participants expressed the view that organisations associated with the Muslim community often face heightened scrutiny from the broader public. The implementation of the **Prevent Agenda** and the UK Government's drive to redefine “extremism” appear to have contributed to an increased sense of scrutiny of Muslim-affiliated organisations, with potentially negative consequences. Moreover, the considerable diversity within Muslim communities has given rise to internal differences, highlighting the range and complexity of issues which require attention.

An illustrative case is evident in the perception of Amina's VAWG-led initiatives addressing sensitive topics such as divorce and relationships, both of which consistently feature in Helpline calls.

Community discussions surrounding these issues can take on a negative tone, driven by concerns that the unreserved support provided by Amina might contribute to family breakdowns and perceived bias in favour of women, potentially overlooking the needs of men. Addressing such perceptions and promoting a nuanced understanding of Amina's work becomes crucial in navigating these challenges.

### Muslim & Minority Ethnic

In the 2021 census for England and Wales, **92% of Muslims identified as Minority Ethnic** [Asaria et al, 2024]. A dual analysis was not conducted on Scotland's Census 2022 data, but the correlation is likely similar. Hence, attempts to separate religion from culture in the context of external barriers to service accessibility may prove challenging or even futile. Amina has proactively tailored its support services to address this, offering specialised assistance such as Islamic advice on the Helpline when necessary.

Our service users spoke about the potential emergence of contradictions within spaces that aim to be intersectional. The predominance of one cultural group in a given space can lead to a sense of unwelcomeness or irrelevance for those not affiliated with that particular group. The delicate balance between providing comfort and familiarity within specific contexts and embracing diversity proves to be a nuanced challenge. Nevertheless, diverse groups are acknowledged as an important source of community cohesion, creating a sense of unity in appropriate contexts.

“

*I think being Muslim makes a huge impact, because women feel comfortable opening up to us a lot of the time. We do get feedback like 'my GP told me to go there but I'd rather talk to you because you get it', and that is a huge barrier removed.*

**- Staff Member**

”

While Amina is strategically positioned to deliver services and campaigns tailored specifically for Muslim clients, limitations exist due to heightened scrutiny and funding restrictions on religious initiatives. This recognition highlights the importance of continual reflection and adaptation to effectively meet the evolving needs of the diverse communities served.

### Board Experience

During discussions, the board and staff members at Amina reflected on the challenges faced by individuals from marginalised communities in accessing mentorship and established pathways to board membership. The consensus among board members was that training was necessary to fully empower women to realise their potential in their respective roles. It was recognised that there is a lack of guidance and clear routes for people from marginalised backgrounds to join and thrive on boards.



## Overwork & Lack of Access to Suitable Mental Healthcare

Amina's staff shared experiences of encountering vicarious trauma and heightened stress, attributing this to the growing complexity of situations faced by service clients.

“

*This job does carry a lot of emotional baggage and sometimes you hit that burnout more than once a year, but when you're going through it you don't recognise what you're going through. It takes another colleague to say, 'I think you need a day off - you need to take a step back.'*

- Staff Member

”

The inadequate availability of mental health services has a direct impact on staff's ability to cope effectively. The link between the increasingly intricate issues faced by clients and the resultant strain on staff highlights the pressing need for a robust mental health support system. Comprehensive support mechanisms are essential to ensure resilience and sustained well-being of staff in times of challenging circumstances inherent in their roles.

“

*To help support staff's mental health and wellbeing, Amina provides all advocacy staff with monthly external support and supervision sessions. In addition, all staff members are entitled to three counselling sessions per year and two dedicated wellbeing days.*

- Staff Member

”

“

*It's the emotional toll - I would finish work and still be thinking about my clients, trying to find solutions to their problems. That's a lot to take on as well; it's a lot of stress.*

- Staff Member

”

## Representation

Amina represents many communities. As an organisation, we have emerged from a unique context: the needs of Muslim & Minority Ethnic women in Scotland. This level of representation is labour-intensive, particularly as these intersecting identities must be consistently represented as valid sources of knowledge at a strategic level, and to a large number of stakeholders.

Rounds of consultation that are “extras” or “afterthoughts” in mainstream projects can dilute input from service users. Small sample sizes impact the diversity of thought and experiences which remain missing, especially when compared to monocultural groups. Ad hoc consultations as a method of inclusion can cause not only friction and competition with other Minority Ethnic organisations, but ineffectual solutions in the long term.

## Reputation

Amina is inherently politicised as an organisation, whether along ethnic, religious, gendered or institutional lines. Recognising this, we have made several public statements on issues which impact Muslim & Minority Ethnic women. These have included statements on **Islamophobia**; calling for a permanent **ceasefire** in Palestine; the Michaela School **prayer ban**; and notable cases of domestic abuse, including that of **Fawziyah Javed**.

Accordingly, Amina's reputation and ability to build trust is a hugely important part of our survival, alongside delivering meaningful services. The impact of controversy, poor client experience or changing our community-led approach to meet funding requirements could all lead to devastating and long-lasting impacts on Amina's service users.

The majority of people who took part in this research said that they actively encourage their friends and families to use Amina's services. Amina's marketing and outreach to grassroots communities are only some of the reasons we have seen a significant change in the ethnic diversity of our service users, staff and volunteers. This positive progression shows not only the impact Amina's work has on the women who use our services, but also the wide range of women who are attracted to work and volunteer with us.



## ix. Amina's Next Steps

Drawing on the data gathered from staff and service users, this section discusses suggestions, strategies and aspirations which will guide Amina's next steps. These points are outlined on page 7 of this report.

### Suggestions for Service Improvements

- Enhanced accessibility
- Better childcare facilities
- Clear timelines for follow-ups
- Access to events beyond clients' cities
- Conscious engagement with diverse communities
- Organised trips
- Regular courses
- A Dundee office
- Additional voluntary opportunities
- More 1-1 sessions

### Clients' Hopes for Future Funding

- Digital skills
- Physical health activities
- Self-development sessions
- Volunteering opportunities
- Muslim-focused sessions
- Tiered employability support for all skills & experience levels to progress and develop their careers, including for women already in work
- Sessions to support parents & guardians in having conversations with young people
- Co-creating syllabus for Upward to ensure that all sessions from external partners are focused on the needs of the group
- Interpreting services
- Language cafés
- Intergenerational learning spaces
- Wider advertising campaigns

## Governance Improvements

- Mentoring for board members
- Streamlined policy reviews
- Supporting Amina into a position similar to other organisations in the women's sector
- Measuring long-term organisational effectiveness
- Clear outline for roles & expectations
- Uniform employee management & support for all staff, including those based outside Glasgow

## What Can Amina Influence on Its Clients' Behalf?

Women who took part in research for this report shared specific suggestions on the impact they believe Amina could have on government policies. These suggestions reflect the barriers Muslim and Minority Ethnic women face. The findings clearly demonstrate that Amina is a powerful vehicle and platform, enabling women to contribute their voices to change that is relevant and effective for them.

*'I believe Amina is working along with government to empowering Muslim women by removing barriers of their life.'*

*'Amina can help identify the needs of BME women and champion these causes at the government level.'*

*'Amina can present the problems of the current needs of women and solutions to it can be provided for the welfare of community.'*



## 1. Protecting Female-Only Spaces

The research shows that women who use Amina's services value sharing space with people from diverse backgrounds. At the same time, maintaining women-only spaces remains vital for many who access our support.

Amina is committed to protecting and providing dedicated women-only spaces, in line with the **Equality Act 2010**. We recognise that many of our service users' religious and cultural practices are rooted in a binary understanding of sex, and our service provision reflects this by being female only. While we respect and support the rights of all individuals, our priority is to ensure our services align with the faith and cultural needs of the women who use Amina.

## 2. Advocating for Specific Needs of Muslim and Minority Ethnic Women

The women who took part in this research were fully aware of Amina's work and specific aim to advocate for the needs of Muslim & Minority Ethnic women.

Participants reflected on the importance and need for work around topics with cultural stigmas, including honour-based abuse, barriers which impact Muslim & Minority Ethnic women and issues which specifically affect women with NRPF.

The women emphasised the need for more advocacy work in these areas, to influence relevant policies and laws. Our findings also highlight that in addition to a continued focus in these areas, efforts must be diversified to reach women whose needs may be currently overlooked.

“

*Highlight challenges of women accessing rental properties. I understand that accommodation is a general problem but as a single MME woman, I think your barriers are more, especially when you don't make a certain income.*

- Service User

”

### 3. The Need for Better “By and For” Representation for Muslim & Minority Ethnic Women

“

*Years of stigmatisation and an aggressive foreign policy has hurt minority groups. Organisations like Amina give women the tools they need to make change. Amina offers ESOL classes, which help minorities build up a voice that will lead to positive change in terms of inclusivity policy.*

- Staff Member

”

Amina's presence and work at the grassroots of Muslim & Minority Ethnic communities have proven to be powerful tools in affecting change in critical positions. The underdevelopment of coercive control legislation is evidence that the input of organisations like Amina is essential at the inception of initiatives such as the **Equally Safe Strategy**.

Amina MWRC is one of few women's organisations that are “by and for” Muslim & Minority Ethnic women in Scotland. Therefore, there is a strong case to make for Amina to expand its policy and research work.

Our 2023 report on in-law abuse is indicative of the specific, unique challenges faced by Muslim & Minority Ethnic women: challenges which Amina is ideally situated to address.



#### 4. Third Sector Must be Fully Equipped or Must Fully Listen to the Most Vulnerable During the Cost of Living Crisis

“

*The cost of living crisis is where Amina should influence government.*

- Service User

”

“

*Raise the voice of the asylum seekers and their challenges to be represented to the Government.*

- Service User

”

Findings from Amina's 2021 COVID Report and an increased uptake of the Hardship Fund indicate that financial support is a growing and pressing need [Armstrong, 2021]. This is particularly evident for asylum seekers; women who do not have control over their visa status; and those who lack sufficient services for support in destitution. Emergency cash access is a crucial lifeline in these cases.

The limited assistance available is a result of the UK Government's restrictions on services aiding people with insecure immigration status. It is important to note the role that Amina and other third sector organisations play in alleviating this hardship, often at personal and financial costs to staff and volunteers.

# Final Reflections

“

*I really wanted to work with Muslim women & families, who can be a really vulnerable group, which is what attracted me to work for Amina. A lot of the poverty and misery can get hidden beneath the surface, and you just need someone to reach out to who will support you. When you see a place like Amina and they have 'Muslim women's resource' in their title, it really encourages you to contact them and talk about your issues because they understand your cultural issues and the dynamics.*

**- Staff Member**

”

We carried out this study in an effort to better understand and illustrate the needs of our service users, volunteers, staff members and the impact Amina's work has had on Muslim & Minority Ethnic women. The importance of this report lays in highlighting Amina's unique selling point of being “by and for” Muslim & Minority Ethnic women in Scotland. Service users who engaged with this research clearly echoed this sentiment.

Our forte lies in the provision of safe spaces; the ability to reach a broad range of people who speak different languages; our understanding and provision of faith & culturally sensitive services; and our organisational responsiveness to niche and grassroots issues.

This positioning indicates that Amina MWRC is a potent advocate, capable of influencing policy and legislation in a meaningful and impactful way.



Mainstream services must become more adept, inclusive and responsive to the needs of Muslim & Minority Ethnic women. It would, however, be remiss not to reflect on the reality that these women are unlikely to be fully provided for in environments which are unable to holistically support them.

This report highlights the overwhelmingly positive response to Amina's services and a strong sense of loyalty to the "warm, loving and caring" Amina family. These views attest to our work, often undertaken at personal and emotional costs which are waived to ensure clients' needs are served. This labour-intensive and underpaid mode of working is motivated entirely by the desire to ensure client well-being through best practice, often in crisis situations exacerbated by a lack of funding and resources.

Service users attested to the transformative impact Amina has on their confidence, safety, empowerment and connection, asserting that without the organisation their lives would not be the same.

**Recognising the extent of work undertaken by staff at Amina and, by extension, other Minority Ethnic-led organisations, is essential in making the case for sustained funding.**

Service users felt a sense of ownership towards Amina, which is evidenced by the insightful new ideas they proposed in this research, including a tiered employability programme offering long-term planning for follow-up and aftercare.

Staff and board members provided perspectives on challenges facing the organisation. A key finding includes how structural inequalities across the women's sector and society as a whole have clearly impacted the role Amina is able to play in supporting the needs of service users.

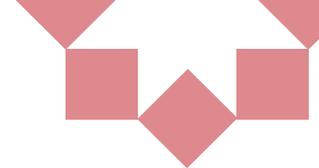
This research stresses the constraints faced by Amina's community development due to strategic funding and resourcing challenges. The need for collaboration across the third sector remains key to ensuring each service user is able to receive the best support, a feat not possible for a single organisation to accomplish.

The hope is that this, combined with reflections on the impact of Amina's work on Muslim and Minority Ethnic women will serve to support stakeholders to identify and create new ways of working to support diverse client groups based on the outlined recommendations.

**We conclude with a call to action; it is not enough to ask Muslim and Minority Ethnic women about their opinions. Women themselves need to be empowered to articulate and lead on addressing their own needs.**

The recommendations in the following section are a call to all stakeholders, within and outwith Amina, to engage deeply with the highlighted issues and collaboratively create a sustainable model in which Amina is strategically protected, sustained and resourced.

Acting on these recommendations will help to create pathways for Muslim & Minority Ethnic women to be represented beyond simply contributing their 'lived experiences' to ad hoc consultations. Whilst this remains a necessary mode of information collation, it is fundamental to move away from oversaturation and consultation fatigue, towards a model which structurally encompasses routes integrating the needs of Muslim & Minority Ethnic women into inclusion good practices.



# Recommendations

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In lieu of curating prescriptive recommendations, we would like to encourage stakeholders, policymakers and funders to engage in a thoughtful and comprehensive examination of three key points.

- 1.** To consider the vital importance and role played by Amina MWRC as one of the very few “by and for” Muslim & Minority Ethnic women's organisations in Scotland.
- 2.** To understand the importance of centring the voices, needs and desires of Amina MWRC’s service users and, by extension, Muslim & Minority Ethnic women in Scotland.
- 3.** To recognise the structural inequalities inherent for “by and for” organisations in order to meet the specific resources required to support the effective growth of Amina MWRC as an organisation.

We extend an invitation to integrate these considerations, and the specific points outlined within them, into strategic planning, policy development, collaborations and the design of service provision. We hope this will foster a holistic approach to development, influencing the outputs and outcomes of service delivery, as well as informing the overall planning process.

**1. To consider the vital importance and role played by Amina MWRC as one of the only “by and for” Muslim & Minority Ethnic women’s organisations in Scotland.**



To recognise that “by and for” organisations have deep knowledge and lived experiences which allow them to work with and for grassroots communities in Scotland.



To formally recognise the irreplaceable and irreplicable value of Amina MWRC's work for, knowledge of and trust with Muslim & Minority Ethnic communities in Scotland.



To explore strategic mechanisms to secure core and consistent funding which ensures that Muslim & Minority Ethnic women have continued access to services designed to meet their intersectional needs.



Amina MWRC should be recognised and engaged with for strategic input based on its unique service provision, with a view to moving beyond “consultation” to maximise its valuable input in shaping policy and legislation.



To recognise that efforts by mainstream organisations in the same field to increase accessibility and inclusivity for Muslim & Minority Ethnic women are welcome and needed. However, this is not interchangeable with focused resourcing and funding required by Amina MWRC to affect grassroots support.

**To understand the importance of centring the voices, 2. needs and desires of Amina's service users and, by extension, Muslim & Minority Ethnic women in Scotland.**



To acknowledge the vital importance of faith in the design and provision of services, spaces and creative outlets for Amina MWRC's service users.



To ensure the preservation and safeguarding of female-only spaces at Amina MWRC in strategic planning, policy development and service provision.



To address accessibility and knowledge gaps by prioritising efforts to widen access to services; increase knowledge of services; and create the provision of safe spaces for Muslim & Minority Ethnic women.



For the third sector to be either fully equipped or fully listened to in addressing needs of MME women during the ongoing cost of living crisis. Their crucial insights & resources must be utilised in providing support and relief, or organisations should be compensated financially for designing frontline crisis services.



To facilitate partnerships between organisations and across sectors to promote collaborative resource and knowledge sharing with the aim of fostering a culture of comprehensive service provision; providing security for the most vulnerable clients; and preventing undue burden on any single organisation.

## 2. (Continued)



To create and implement tiered employability programmes designed to cater to women at all levels of employment.



The creation of easy-to-use processes for post-service follow-ups to ensure accountability, learning and continuous improvement for Amina MWRC.



To enhance accessibility and inclusivity, core budgeting for both public and third sector entities should be revised to intentionally allocate funds for interpreting costs. This will help ensure that all individuals have equal access to services and resources.



To invest in capacity-building initiatives to empower and strengthen volunteer-led programmes within the community.





### 3. To recognise the structural inequalities inherent for “by and for” organisations in order to meet specific resourcing requirements and support the effective growth of Amina MWRC as an organisation.



To recognise and create strategic pathways to address the underpaid, labour-intensive and emotionally expensive work that Amina MWRC's staff undertake, often in crisis situations.



To support staff members with the impact of vicarious trauma, which is organisationally challenging without the proper resources to manage it.



To work toward resourcing the capacity for Muslim & Minority Ethnic women to be actively engaged in leadership and decision-making processes. This can enable stakeholders to address structural barriers and inequalities, beyond capturing “lived experiences” as a means to affect change: a process that can be, and is, a source of emotional fatigue for Muslim and Minority Ethnic women as service providers and service users.



Funders should provide organisations with sufficient time to prepare and submit funding applications.



Funders should recognise that limited capacity, stretched time and resources often act as impediments to successful completion of funding applications.

### 3. (Continued)



Support should be extended to facilitate the measurement of overall effectiveness. This will enable organisations like Amina MWRC to better assess their impact and make data-informed decisions to enhance their outcomes and better serve their service users.



It is imperative to establish mentoring programmes and succession planning for boards and governors. These programmes are crucial in providing guidance, support and opportunities for leadership development, ultimately contributing to a more inclusive and equitable governance system.



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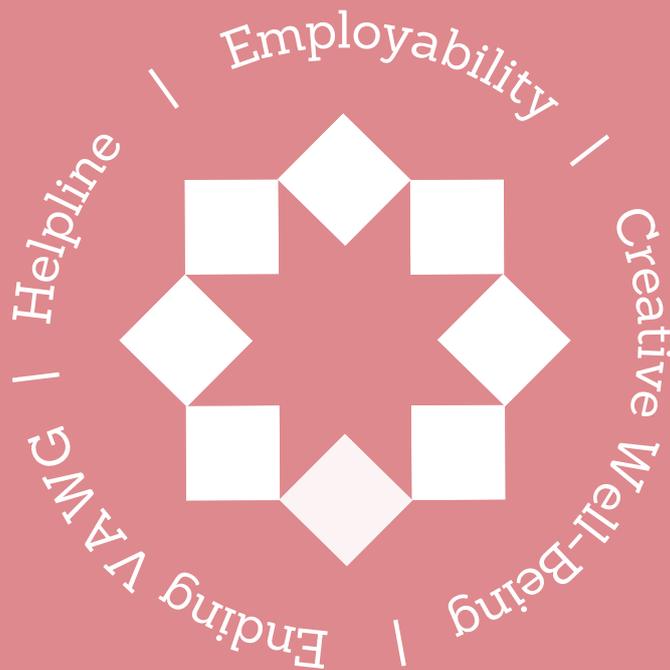
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