

Date: 17th May 2022

Media Statement

Congratulations to Shaista Gohir OBE on her Crossbench Peerage

We are really pleased to announce that Shaista Gohir OBE of the Muslim Women's Network UK (MWNUK) has been appointed to the House of Lords as a non-party-political peer. She was selected by the House of Lords Appointments Commission following an independent competitive process and recommended to the Prime Minister because of the expertise and experience she will be able to bring to the work of the House.

Shaista, who is of Pakistani heritage, has worked in the charity sector for nearly twenty years and is a leading women's rights campaigner, recognised as one of the most influential Muslim women in Britain. Shaista first joined MWNUK in 2005 when it was an advisory group to government. She then became one of the founding members who established MWNUK as an independent organisation and has led its growth since, serving as the Chair and Executive Director and building MWNUK to become a highly respected and award-winning charity. To oversee the charity's next period of growth, Shaista recently stepped off the board to lead it as the CEO.

As a leading voice on issues relating to Muslim women, Shaista has ensured their lived experiences inform policy making. For example, she successfully challenged the Foreign Office policy on charging 16-17-year-old forced marriage victims repatriation fees. She conducted ground-breaking research on sexual exploitation of Asian girls and contributed to the government's Sharia Law Review with her research on Muslim marriage and divorce. Her report on Muslim women's experience of the criminal justice system shone a light on the justice gap faced by victims of abuse while her latest report, which will be published in June 2022, will focus on the harms experienced by Muslim women and their babies during their maternity care. Her other achievements have included setting up the national Muslim Women's Network Helpline, Counselling Service. She also established the APPG on Muslim Women.

In addition to her work at MWNUK, Shaista has served on various national and international advisory groups and boards. She is currently a Non-Executive Director at the University Hospital North Midlands NHS Trust and the Women's Voices Lead at the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, an honorary role with responsibility for ensuring women's views and experiences of maternity and gynaecology services are heard. Her passion for social justice led to her to also founding a new charity last year, the Nisa Global Foundation, which will help women and girls in developing countries. Shaista has already been awarded the MBE for services to Muslim People and to Community Relations and OBE for Gender Equality and Women's Rights.

Commenting on the appointment, **MWNUK Chair, Dr Iram Sattar MBE said:** *"This is a huge achievement given the highly competitive process; the appointment is very well deserved, and we are proud of her. Shaista will make an excellent addition to the House of Lords. Her dedication and passion for public service is demonstrated in all the roles she has been involved in, particularly how she has led the development of MWNUK with her ideas and vision."*

Shaista Gohir OBE added: *"It is a huge honour to have been invited to join such a prestigious institution and be at the heart of law making. I did not think someone like me would ever be given such an opportunity. I see this role as an extension of my activism and will use my voice to fly the flag for women's rights, inequalities experienced by the most vulnerable in society, the charity sector, women's health, the NHS and of course for the West Midlands region. I look forward to working independently with peers across the House, sharing my expertise and providing scrutiny of government policy and legislation."*

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1. For further information, get in touch on contact@mwnuk.co.uk / neelam@mwnuk.co.uk 0121 236 9000
2. Muslim Women's Network UK works to advance equality and social justice for Muslim women through advocacy, campaigning, research, training and helpline / counselling service.
3. More information about MWNUK's work can be found on www.mwnuk.co.uk