

Review of MWNUK Helpline Service



Centre for Facilitation
March 2016

Contents

Muslim Women’s Network UK	2
Remit of Report	2
SUMMARY	3
SECTION ONE: Overview of Helpline	5
SECTION TWO: Analysis of Helpline Beneficiaries	9
SECTION THREE: Providing Support and Follow Up	18
SECTION FOUR: Supporting Wider Work of MWNUK	26
SECTION FIVE: The Helpline Team	30
SECTION SIX: Delivering A Professional Helpline Service	36
SECTION SEVEN: Conclusions and Recommendations	40
SECTION EIGHT: Appendix	46

MUSLIM WOMEN'S NETWORK UK

Muslim Women's Network UK (MWNUK) is a national Muslim women's charity working on social justice and equality for Muslim women and girls. It conducts research, operates a helpline, deliver campaigns, run training sessions, comments in the media, produces resources and does advocacy work through reports and by engaging with government officials and other public bodies. Further information about the work of MWNUK can be found on the website www.mwnuk.co.uk.

REMIT OF REPORT

Funding was generously provided by the Henry Smith Charity for the evaluation of the first year of operation of the MWNUK Helpline Service. This funding has enabled the commissioning of an independent organisation to review the service and provide an opportunity for the MWNUK team to step back and assess the achievements and the lessons learnt from the first year of operation so that the service can continue to develop and benefit more Muslim women in the future.

This report has been written by Centre for Facilitation, an independent company and the report will evaluate the first year of operation of the MWNUK Helpline and measure its achievement against the stated aims and intended impact of the Helpline Service. Throughout the report we have used stories of callers to the Helpline, changing names and some details to ensure anonymity whilst giving a sense of the range of people that the Helpline has supported over this first year.

SUMMARY

The MWNUK Helpline was launched in January 2015 with its own separate website www.mwnhelpline.co.uk, which contains useful advice, information and details of other support services and helplines. This report is based on the first year of operation from January 2015 to December 2015.

During the first year of operation the Helpline team have handled **814 contacts** from over **335** different individuals (beneficiaries) over this first year, with a very small team of employees and volunteers operating the helpline for a limited time each week.

These contacts during the first year of operation have covered 39 different issues. The five most frequent issues raised by beneficiaries were:

- Marriage
- Divorce
- Domestic Violence
- Mental Health/Feelings
- Forced Marriage

During the first year of operation the Helpline has directly assisted beneficiaries to find solutions to their situations often through advice, support and signposting to other services. For some individuals the MWNUK Helpline is a valuable starting point to sharing their concerns with another individual and starting to resolve the problems they are facing.

The Helpline has been able to intervene and support individuals experiencing a range of inter connected problems before they have escalated further. The service has been used mainly by women from the Muslim community however the service has been accessed by other faiths and genders.

The Helpline is both demonstrating the values of the wider network and providing narratives and evidence which will enable MWNUK to continue to be able to influence policy and practice and to identify gaps in service provision.

The Helpline was established with a small funding base to test out whether the service was needed. It is pleasing to note that one of the start-up funding trusts (Henry Smith Charity) will continue this funding for 2016 and 2017. The Tudor Trust awarded a three year grant in October 2015 for £100,000 so that the service could be expanded and in March 2016 the Government awarded the MWNUK Helpline £114,000 to expand the service so that it can be operated full time (10.00 – 16.00)

Our key recommendations are that the Helpline needs to:

- 1. Seek funding to increase the levels of staffing on the helpline so that there will always be two paid staff available with appropriate admin and volunteer support.**

- 2. Explore additional funding for case workers and for a culturally/faith sensitive counselling service to support the more complex issues, where follow up is needed both with the beneficiary and with other agencies involved in the situation.**
- 3. Continue to develop collaborative working relationships with other agencies and explore any possibilities for joint projects and working.**
- 4. Continue to explore ways of raising the profile of the Helpline in key Muslim areas beyond the Midlands and London and for younger women and girls. This will require additional funding for outreach workers in these areas and to develop ways of engaging more with younger Muslim women – eg exploring a mobile phone application.**
- 5. Continue to support employees and volunteers to prevent professional burnout in the long term – additional staffing will enable the supervisor to spend more time supporting the team instead of handling calls on the Helpline**
- 6. Review data recording to ensure consistency and efficiency and ensure that the information that is being captured continues to support the evaluation of the effectiveness of the service**

SECTION ONE: OVERVIEW OF HELPLINE

CASE STUDY: Child Sexual Exploitation

A mother was worried that her 16 year old daughter was being groomed and sexually exploited. She had been staying out progressively later at night and was being dropped home late at night by an older Asian male. She had also started missing college and was being secretive.

The mother was encouraged to engage with her daughter to find out more, some tips were provided and a booklet on Child Sexual Exploitation was posted to her. She was advised to contact the college pastoral care team to alert them about the concerns, to note the registration number of the car and to raise the concerns with her local police force.

BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY OF THE SERVICE

The Helpline Service was established in January 2015 with the following stated aims:

We provide a national specialist faith and culturally sensitive service that is confidential and non-judgmental, which offers information, support, guidance and referrals to Asian and Muslim women and girls from diverse ethnic / faith backgrounds who are suffering from or at risk of abuse or facing problems on a range of issues. The Helpline also acts as an interface or conduit between the victims and services that offer a concrete response to the request for help

The first operational day was Friday 16th January 2015. The initial funding for the Helpline was generously provided by:

- Big Lottery Awards for All - £10,000
- Henry Smith Charity - £28,950

The Helpline is a national specialist faith and culturally sensitive helpline that is confidential and non-judgmental. The Helpline offers information, support, guidance and referrals for those who are suffering from or at risk of abuse or facing problems on a range of issues.

The Helpline was established primarily for Muslim women; however calls are taken from people of any faith or no faith. This could include:

- Asian women of other faiths
- Men/Boys who are concerned about women or need support eg about the risk of forced marriage
- Younger women/girls

In 2015 the Helpline operated a phone line service on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays between 10.00 and 13.00 and on Saturdays between 19.00 and 21.00.

These hours have been increased from January 2016 to five mornings a week and in addition there is a small outreach element to encourage calls from hard to reach women (this is only funded currently for the Birmingham area).

The calls made to the number are free from landlines and from July 2015 calls from mobiles were also made free. During the opening hours the team will also respond to contacts made by text, "What's App" messages, and email and voicemail messages. A webchat facility is offered between 10.00 and 13.00 on operating days and this "pops up" as an offer on the website.

In the first year of operation additional funding allowed the team to grow to a team of three part time workers, volunteers and is managed by the project manager. The team share the equivalent of one full time worker's hours.

The Helpline is multi-issue service. In the analysis of the 2015 calls it was identified that 39 different issues had been responded to. The issues range from employment issues, domestic violence, faith and spirituality, female genital mutilation, forced marriage and trafficking (see Appendix for full list).

ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

The **ethical principles** under which the helpline operates reflects the ethos of **MWNUK**. These include:

Confidentiality - The information taken from the caller will remain confidential within the helpline. The intention is to create a safe environment where callers may be able to speak freely. However the team recognises that there are situations where there is a duty to disclose confidential information. These situations include: when the caller is at risk of self-harm; where there is a perceived risk of harm to others; where a serious crime has been committed; if helpline workers are threatened; or if the team receive a court order to do so. The safety of the caller will also be considered when making assessment to breach confidentiality.

Non-Judgmental - All callers will be treated equally and judgements will not be made about them. The team will give advice, information, help and support in a non-judgement manner.

Anonymity - Callers can make contact without revealing their identity. Any records stored that may have the callers identity will be stored safely and will only be accessible to named and restricted senior staff

Equal opportunities - Callers will not be discriminated against and will be treated equally regardless of their faith (including religious sect), ethnicity, age, gender, disability, and sexuality.

CASE STUDY: Honour Based Violence

A 16 year old girl of Arab heritage was beaten by her father after he found out that she had been exchanging text messages with a boy. She was worried about her safety and that she would be forced into a marriage because her father was making plans to take her abroad to the Middle East.

Initially she did not want to involve the police. However with the support of the Helpline team she felt confident enough to make contact with the police herself. Social services became involved and she was placed in safe accommodation.

INTENDED IMPACT OF HELPLINE

When the Helpline was established it was intended to support and make a difference to the lives of women and girls in the following ways:

- Increase reporting of violence against women and girls
- More women and girls getting the help they need and making informed decisions about their lives
- Reduced burden on other agencies due to targeted referrals
- Women and girls being better prepared in case of their problem escalating
- As issues faced by Muslim women and girls are often complex and connected, better linkages being made across these issues resulting in better quality of help
- Women and girls feeling less isolated knowing help is a phone call away
- Improved faith based responses that benefit women
- Building up a better national profile about the issues encountered by Muslim women and girls and how these affect their lives and identify patterns to influence policy and practice

These impact statements are reviewed in the [report conclusions](#).



SECTION TWO: ANALYSIS OF HELPLINE BENEFICIARIES

CASE STUDY: Female Genital Mutilation

A Somali woman in her early 20s was still traumatised about the 'cutting' she experienced as a child. Her family had gone back to Somalia when she was seven. While her mother was out, her grandmother had taken her (and her sister) to have FGM. She recalled how she remembers bleeding all day and still feels upset thinking about it. She also explained how she suffers from recurring infections and problems with her periods.

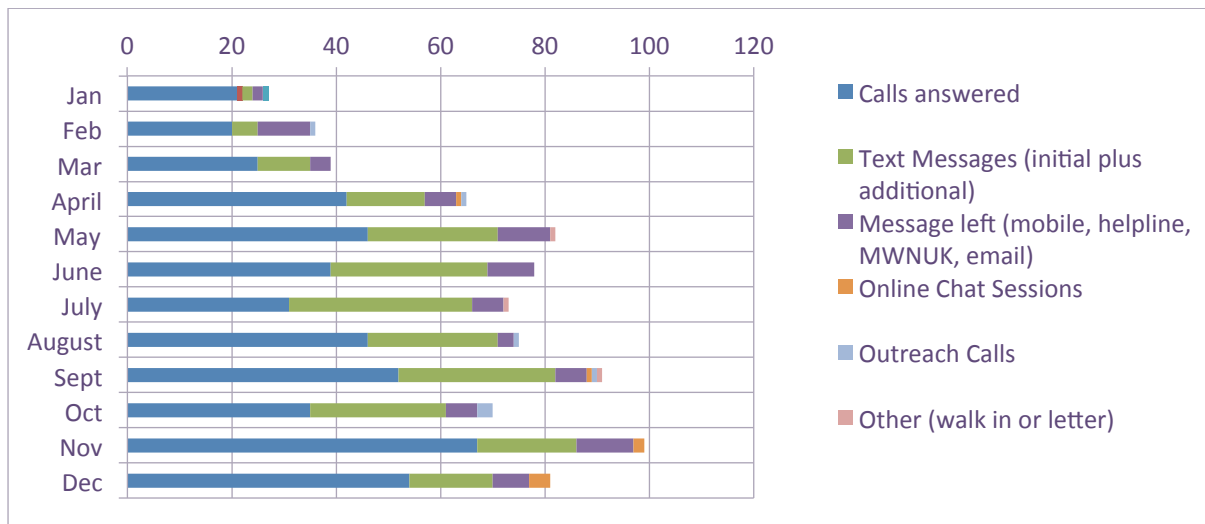
She said she had been feeling very depressed lately because she found out that she may need to have a hysterectomy. She was worried about marriage and also said her faith was fluctuating between being religious and doing things that she should not be doing. She said she really wanted to talk to someone. MWN Helpline provided her that space and time to talk and she was provided with details of a specialist FGM counselling service in London.

VOLUME OF CALLS

814 contacts were logged during the first year of operation. These figures will include repeat calls from one beneficiary in different sessions. It does not however include every contact made by that beneficiary. An example is that during the observation visit there was a beneficiary who had sent 100 “What’s App” messages overnight to the team. These were just recorded as one message.

The number of contacts made increased steadily from the opening in January to the end of the year with the peak in November (99 contacts) and a slight drop back in December (81), which would be expected during the holiday period.

In most months the main method of contact is by voice call. There is a noted growth in text contact from May onwards. The team make use a range of technologies to encourage contact.



Observation

The volume of contacts may be under-reported. The team could consider recording initial contact and then further contact and could have a method for logging long exchanges in a category “over 5 contacts”. Whilst we would not want to record every “What’s App” message, the team have to read each of these even if they just respond in a summary to the beneficiary.

There are some emerging patterns in volume of calls, these could be random or could be linked to events. An example is that there is peak in calls during May would could coincide with a media campaign on Forced Marriages. The dip in calls in July/August could be the combination of holidays and Ramadan. Over the next year these charts can be compared to note any potential seasonal trends so that staffing could be adjusted if needed for the

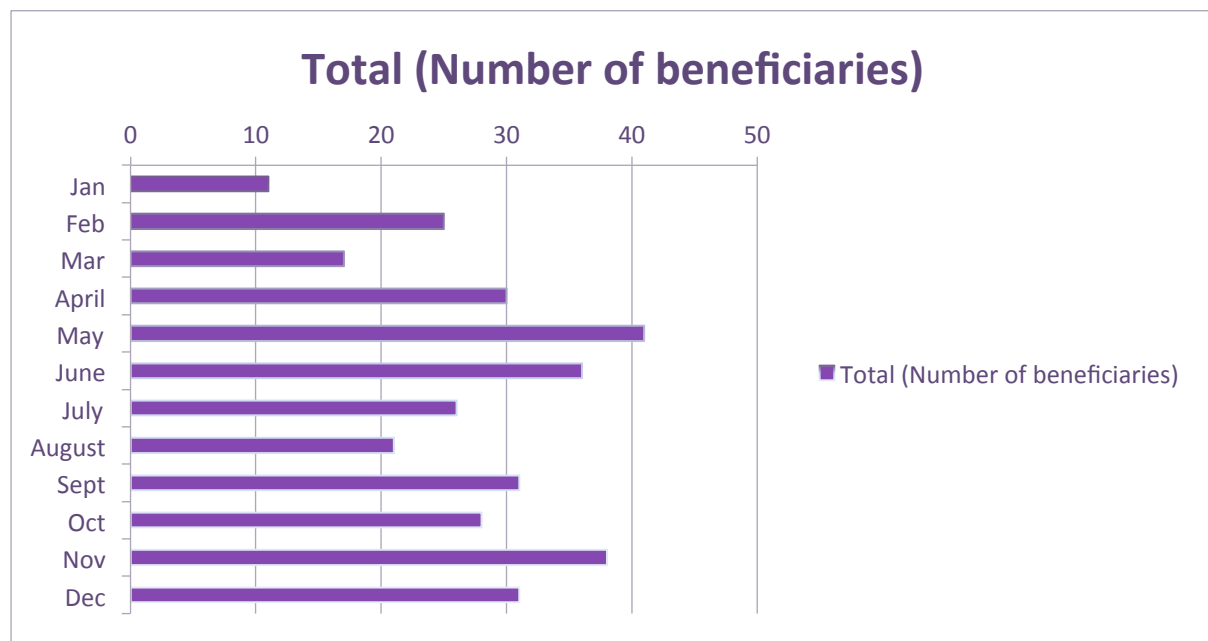
quieter/busier periods. It is difficult however to predict these future trends with just one year of data.

The low take up of the On-Line Chat should be reviewed to explore what is preventing people using this form of contact and to explore possible alternatives. One option being considered is a mobile phone application which may appeal more to younger women.

The growth in contact via text and other forms of non-verbal contact would be expected to continue as this is in line with current research into the growth of non-verbal contact as the preferred communication method. ([Research Report by Forbes 2015](#))

NUMBERS OF PEOPLE HELPED

For a helpline service recording the volume of calls is a useful way of measuring productivity levels and the previous section explored the volume of contact. However as mentioned this can include multiple contacts so this section is about the number of people who were helped (beneficiaries)



The database which was set up for the MWNUK Helpline recognises the importance of recording the number of beneficiaries. Each enquiry is logged with a case number onto the database and it is from this recording that we are able to see number of people who have benefitted from having contact with the Helpline.

The total number of beneficiaries is **335** people

The peak period for people helped was May with a total of **41** beneficiaries, followed closely by November with **38** beneficiaries.

Some beneficiaries are helped in one session, however for many there are often hours of follow up calls and further conversations until the work is completed. This can prevent the Helpline worker being able to answer the calls and the complexity of some of the needs of the different beneficiaries does stretch the ability of the current team to be able to respond quickly to all the requests made.

WHO BENEFITS FROM THE HELPLINE?

Data has been recorded throughout the year using the bespoke database. This has meant that the team know have a much clearer understanding about the typical beneficiary. They are also better able to assess any gaps in the service provision so that in the future it is possible to specifically target these groups through outreach work both face to face and remotely using social media.

Gender of Beneficiaries

The Helpline is branded as a Muslim Women's Helpline and the gender of the callers does broadly reflect this.

91% of calls were from women, 7% from men and 2% were unknown gender.

CASE STUDY: Male Victim Domestic Violence

A man in his 30s who was from Pakistan was being subjected to physical, emotional and financial domestic abuse following his marriage to a UK woman. The perpetrators were both his wife and his in laws. The abuse included threats to kill him.

He was extremely depressed and fearful and was having suicidal thoughts. He was encouraged to report the threats and abuse to the police and he was referred to MWNUK's internal counselling service. With this assistance he was able to leave his abusive situation.

Some of the calls from men were in support of their female relatives in abusive marriages. These calls were made either because their female relative did not speak English or because she was reluctant to involve others in her situation. Some males calling the helpline were from other professional services calling on behalf of a woman or girl.

Age of Beneficiaries

Age was specified in 72% of the calls and the calls are spread across a wide range of ages. Almost 50% of the calls are made by people between 22 and 40 which may indicate the needs of this age group.

The MWNUK Helpline Team would like to be able to do more outreach work so that they can make more contact with young people who may be particularly at risk of Forced Marriage, Revenge Porn and Extremism. There have been calls from teaching staff raising concerns about welfare issues affecting their students. The team are currently involved in outreach work in colleges and schools; this has included a series of awareness workshops in schools on forced marriage, child sexual exploitation and female genital mutilation.

One area the team are considering is the use of a mobile phone helpline application to encourage younger people to engage more with the helpline.

AGE	RECORDED	%
Under 16	12	3.6
16-18	14	4.2
19-21	16	4.8
22-25	44	13
26-30	44	13
31-40	67	20
41-50	37	11
51-60	5	1.5
Over 60	3	0.9
Not Specified	93	28
TOTAL	335	100%

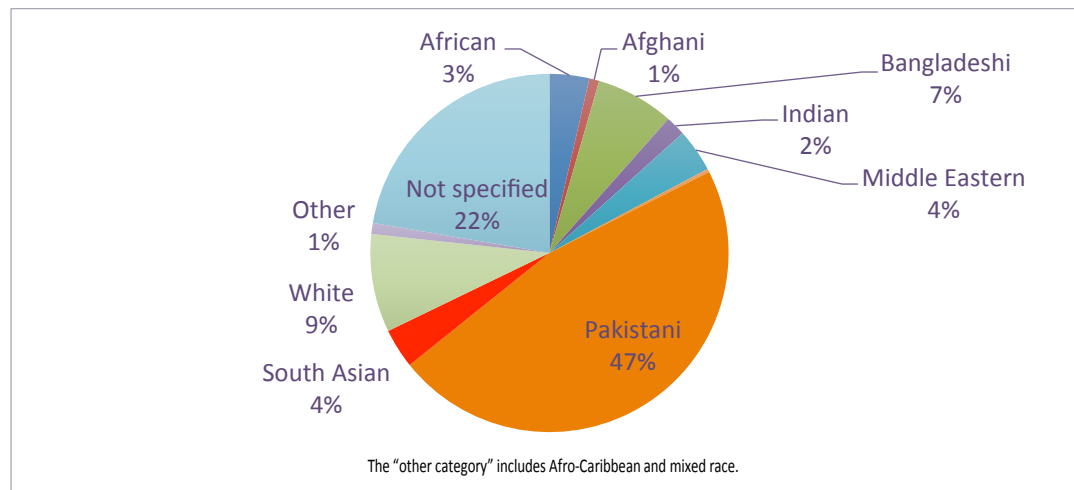
CASE STUDY: Rape and Sexual Violence

A Yemeni woman in her 20s was raped by someone she knew in her community. She did not want to report the crime to the police because she was frightened that if her brothers found out she would be subjected to honour based violence. She felt that she would be blamed and accused of bringing shame to the family. She was depressed and kept having flashbacks about the incident and was worried about being pregnant.

MWN Helpline contacted the nearest Sexual Assault Referral Centre and arranged an appointment for her. She was reluctant to attend so a helpline worker supported her through the process so she that she could receive specialist help.

Ethnic Background of Beneficiaries

Where ethnicity is recorded the largest group within this are from a Pakistani origin (**47%**). There are a significant number of beneficiaries where ethnic background has not been stated (22%).



Faith of Beneficiaries

82% of beneficiaries were Muslim. Some beneficiaries who were not Muslim choose to make contact because the Helpline is delivered by a different faith:

"I don't want to speak to my own community about this because I know they will judge me"

Language of Beneficiaries

The majority of calls were in English (93%). The remaining 7% of calls used the following languages which are spoken by team members on the Helpline.

LANGUAGE USED	RECORDED	%
Arabic	2	0.6
Punjabi /Mirpuri	9	2.7
Urdu	11	3.3

Offering languages can help to reach out to women in the community who would not otherwise be able to access the advice that they need.

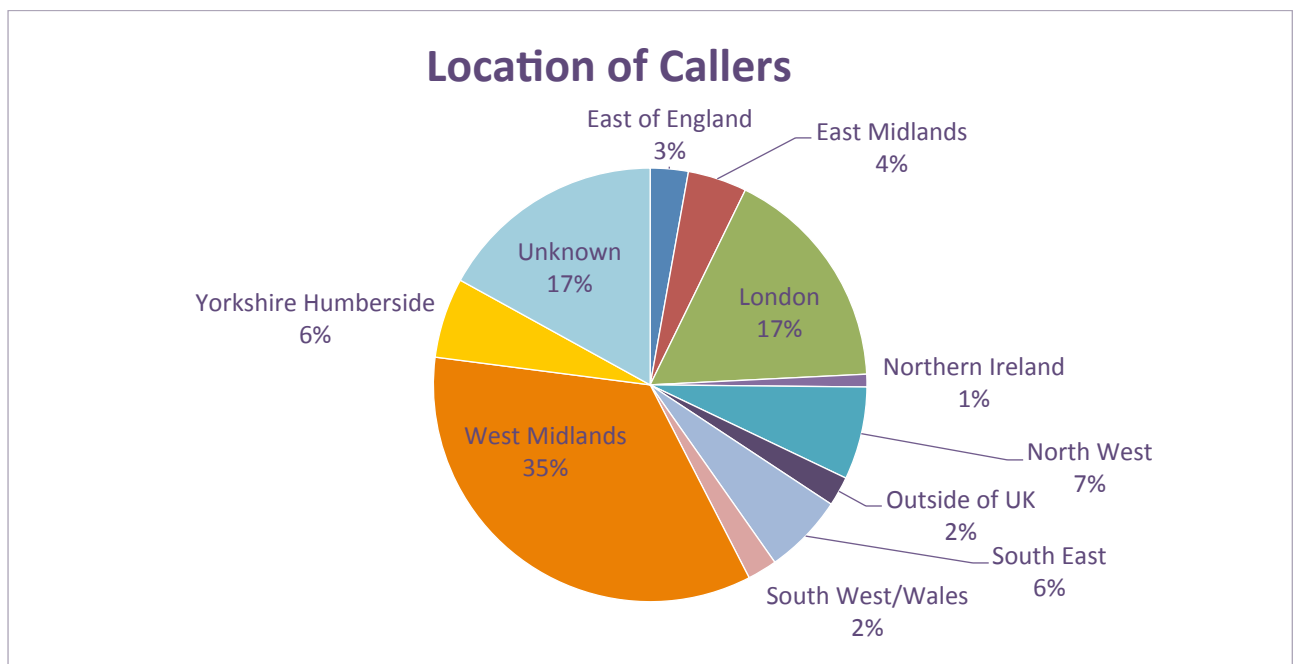
CASE STUDY: Domestic Violence

A Pakistani woman in her 30s with two young children was the victim of domestic abuse for many years. She could not speak English and did not know where to get help. A trusted family member spoke to the MWNUK Helpline on her behalf.

The bilingual Helpline Worker then spoke to the woman directly in Urdu. After fully understanding her situation, her situation was reported to the Police and she was found safe accommodation in a refuge in another city. While her recourse was processed, the Helpline managed to secure a private donation for cover her emergency need; I.e. food, hygiene pack, and nappies.

Location of Beneficiaries

MWNUK Helpline is a national service which is available for anyone in the UK. The Helpline team are based in the West Midlands. Calls are recorded from across the UK. The highest numbers of beneficiaries, 33%, were from the Midlands. A significant number of beneficiaries came from the London area (**16%**)



Observations on Demographics

Data Recording

During the call basic data is recorded on each individual call record sheet which is then transposed onto the database. This data is not complete for a variety of reasons.

1. The inappropriateness of asking demographic questions during an emotionally fraught call.
2. The sensitivity of many callers who request that this information is not recorded
3. Helpline team members forgetting to record this data during the call.

During the evaluation project the Helpline team were briefed about the importance of recording demographic data. In 2016 there will be a focus to accurately log demographical data.

Geographical Impact

In the 2011 Census it was identified that 76% of the UK Muslim population live in four key regions.

Four Main Muslim Areas in UK (2011 Census)	% of Muslims	% of beneficiaries from this area handled by MWNUK
London	37	16
West Midlands	14	33
North West	13	7
Yorkshire and Humberside	12	6

Source: Muslim Council of Britain Census Results based on (Census 2011. ONS Table QS208EW)

From these figures the MWNUK Helpline is being accessed in all these four key areas of Muslim populations with a high take up in the West Midlands where the Helpline is based. The number of callers from the North West and from Yorkshire and Humberside is lower than other regions comparatively. Ways of raising awareness of the Helpline in the North West and Yorkshire is to be encouraged.

Ethnic Background Impact

In the 2011 Census data the largest ethnic category is Asian (67%) and within this the largest group are people from a Pakistani background (38%) so the statistics from the MWNUK Helpline seem to reflect the overall proportion of ethnic groups in the Muslim community.

The Muslim Council of Britain Census 2011 report highlights the growth of Muslim communities from conflict zones including Afghanistan, Sri Lanka and some African Muslim communities. Since the report was published we have seen an increase in refugees from Syria, many of whom are Muslim. The Helpline service will need to continue to develop ways of reaching out to the diverse Muslim communities to reflect the changing trends of ethnic background in the UK Muslim population.

Data Categorisation

Some of the categories used for recording ethnic background by the Helpline do not correlate to those used by the census (for instance Middle Eastern is used instead of Arab) it would be worth reviewing the classifications used by the Helpline so that it is possible to make consistent direct comparisons between the two data sets.

SECTION THREE: PROVIDING SUPPORT AND FOLLOW UP

CASE STUDY: Trafficking

Eliza emigrated from Czech Republic with her three children, having met a man online who helped her to come to the UK. He took her to the job centre, obtained her National Insurance number but did not let her leave the house, unless she was supervised. Her children were not allowed to attend school. She shared one room with her children and was emotionally and physically abused. She could not speak any English but during the supervised visits to a local park she made friends with a local Muslim woman who called the Helpline for help.

The Helpline contacted Hope for Justice. A plan was agreed with the friend and eventually they were able to rescue the family who are now in a place of safety.

“Thank you to all at MWNUK. You all played a key part in the rescue of four vulnerable people from dreadful circumstances” Hope for Justice

RESPONSE PROVIDED TO BENEFICIARIES

In total 98% of people who made contact with the MWNUK Helpline were provided with a response, only 2% of people could not be helped. This was mainly due to responding to emails or messages and not hearing back from the person who had made contact.

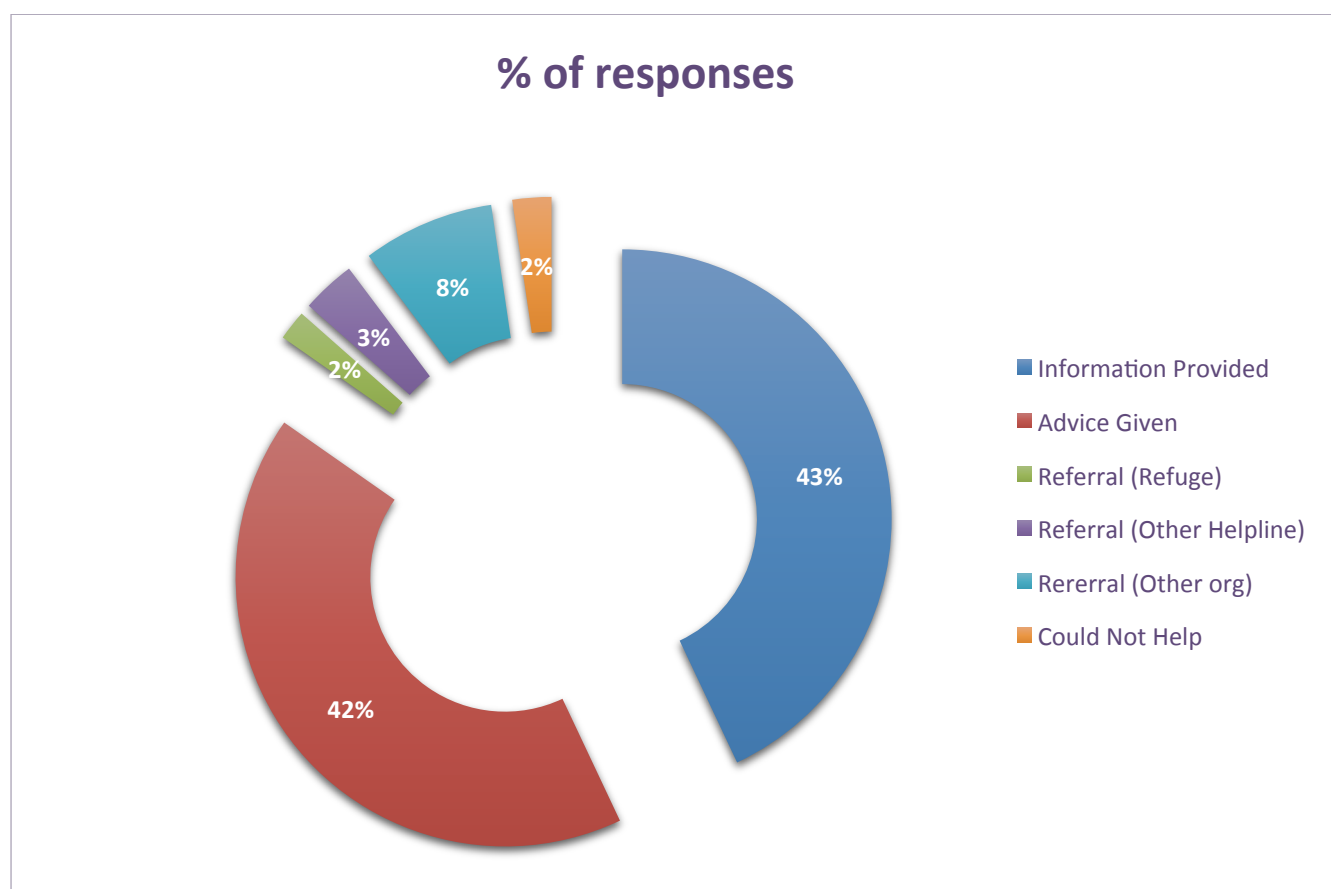
The complex needs of many of the beneficiaries means that there is often more than one response required. The Helpline team record the first response and any other additional responses provided.

85% of the total responses were either to provide information (eg signposting to another service) or to provide advice/support.

Observations

From the analysis the main need is for information and advice and this is often the first response, with only a small number of beneficiaries having data recorded for secondary and tertiary responses.

In 13% of calls the Helpline made a direct referral to another agency including Helplines, a Refuge or the Police.



ISSUES ADDRESSED

The distinctive feature of the MWNUK Helpline is that it is a multi-issue service. It offers people the opportunity to make contact on a wide range of issues.

The table in **Appendix 1** gives the full range of issues which have been handled. There are **39** different issues that have been handled over the first year of operation. Many calls are not about one issue but several different issues so these are recorded as primary, secondary and tertiary issues. There were **335** primary issues handled in contacts with the beneficiaries.

Calls to the Helpline are often complex, involving multiple needs and calls often covered more than one issue. 51% of these contacts involved an additional area of concern and 17% had a third issue that they needed to discuss with the team.

Looking at **all** the issues addressed in each call (combining the primary, secondary and tertiary issues) there are five strong themes emerging about what the beneficiaries are looking for help with when they make contact with the Helpline:

1. Marriage 25%
2. Divorce 16%
3. Domestic Violence 15%
4. Mental Health/Feelings 15%
5. Forced Marriage 10%

The Helpline Team listen carefully to the initial reason for the call and allow space for the beneficiary to feel listened to. The team felt that the main challenge in being able to meet the expectation of all callers was when specific immigration/legal advice was sought or when counselling was being sought.

Initially there was no counselling service available to the team at MWNUK and sometimes the only option was to offer beneficiaries the option of contacting their GP for access to the limited free counselling provided there. Funding was secured during 2015 for a pilot study which was limited to women in the West Midlands area who are victims of crime. This pilot scheme was very successful and had a high take up which has shown a demand for the service, even though the funding limited the availability of the service.

Observation

The long list of issues handled shows one of the challenges faced by the management team: extensive training is needed to prepare employees and volunteers so that they can both handle these issues and can keep up to date with any related legal or policy changes related to these issues.

The style of the Helpline workers is to gently listen to the initial request made by the beneficiary and to give them space to feel safe to share the often deeper issues. This process is a recognised therapeutic process where the “[presenting problem](#)” is often less significant than the “underlying problem” which is rarely disclosed until the woman feels safe and trusts the process.

Mental Health issues and feelings were mentioned in at least 15% of the calls as one of the reasons for making contact with the Helpline. The Helpline workers are not training counsellors and there is a limitation of how far they can take the call. It would make sense to explore a more established in house faith and culturally sensitive MWNUK counselling service.

It is interesting that even though the list is so long there are still issues which fall outside of the current listing, with a recording of other in 6% of primary, 4% of secondary and 11% of tertiary contacts.

It is recommended that this list of items is kept under review because this will help shape future training for new helpline members and by specifying any issues falling under the “other” category the MWNUK Helpline will be able to respond to any emerging needs for information and advice on issues which are not currently being thought of by the team.

CASE STUDY: Mental Health

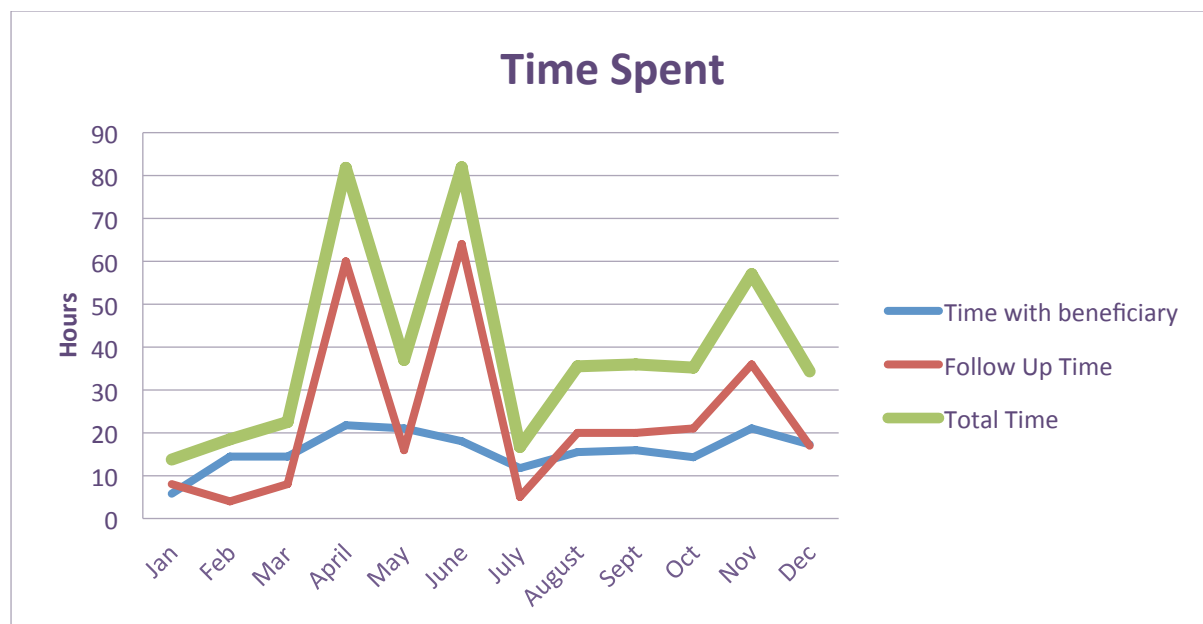
An Asian female in her 20s was very depressed because she was struggling to cope with the emotional and physical abuse she had suffered from her family after they found out she was a lesbian. Her mental health was also having an impact on her work. She was referred to the internal MWNUK counselling service. After completing the counselling sessions, her mental health had improved and she felt more confident and less anxious and depressed.

THE COMPLEXITY OF THE NEEDS MET BY THE HELPLINE

The Helpline was established from an understanding that the needs of Muslim women and girls were complex and were not adequately met by other service providers. Although not case workers the Helpline team do spend time on the initial call and will support with further calls or follow up when needed.

The average time spent on each beneficiary was 1 hour and 25 minutes. Of this time, 35 minutes is spent on the initial call and over 50 minutes is spent on the follow up to this call. This gives an indication of the complexity of these Helpline calls. According to the Helpline Partnerships the average call length to a [Helpline is 40 minutes](#).

The chart shows how the time spent with the beneficiaries (blue line) is around the same each month with an average time of **15 hours a month** spent on calls. There is a much wider variability in the follow up time (red line) and hence the total time (green line). In the months of April and June the Helpline team were handling complex cases which required a large amount of follow up with over 80 hours in total spent during both months.



Observation

There is a variance in demand for the Helpline Service that cannot be easily planned for and requires a flexible response from both volunteers and employees. It is hard to identify any clear patterns to the peaks. We could speculate that June was Ramadan, November was the time of the Paris attacks but April has no significant event that might cause an increase in people needed advice and support.

Keeping a record of working hours and encouraging employees to take time back during quieter periods will enable the Helpline to continue to have an engaged working team who

will be willing to put in an extra discretionary effort during peak periods. It will be important that this discretionary effort is probably managed and does not become an assumed norm for the team.

A UNIQUE SERVICE

There are 46 Helplines for women listed on the [“Find a Helpline Service”](#) specifically for women. These tend to be single issue or area focused eg sexual health, pregnancy, rape, domestic violence. The only multi-issue helpline that is offered to Muslims on this site is the MWNUK Helpline.

“A lot of Muslim women do not access other services, they ring us because they think that this service is for them and we will understand their needs”

“We are not a religious organisation but women are coming to us for spiritual advice, they are wanting to have different interpretations based on Islam”

Helpline Worker

The service is culturally sensitive and it was clear during the observed sessions that this sensitivity enables the Helpline team to ask the right types of questions to encourage beneficiaries to open up and share sensitive information.

“We have a good understanding of the cultural issues, we understand the family systems in the community and this helps people to feel comfortable. We can reassure them by sharing appropriate analogies with them”

Helpline Worker

The signposting service that the Helpline offers is a very valuable way of showing beneficiaries that there are options to help them. Many of the beneficiaries are socially isolated so are not aware of the different options that they can access.

The calls are often about helping beneficiaries to help themselves by giving them a safe space to explore what their concerns are and to articulate, sometimes for the first time, their proposed plan of action. As one beneficiary said in an observed call

“ I know what I need to do and you have helped me to realise I need to do it”

PROMOTING THE HELPLINE

There is a promotional video about the MWNUK Helpline available on [You Tube](#) and from the [website](#). This video was launched in January 2015 to coincide with the new service. There have been 320 views of this video, during 2015, with significant viewing peaks during the launch of the service when there was an active media campaign and communication with the members of the MWNUK.

The team have also produced A3 posters and pocket size folded helpline cards with information and numbers. These are given out at events across the country. The posters have been sent out to surgeries and community centres.

Observation

The majority of the posters have been distributed in the Birmingham area due to the location of the outreach team. To achieve more of a national reach then it would be worth considering running have targeted campaigns using outreach workers in different regions, perhaps working with other regional partners.

The limitation on publicity has been that the team do not want to promote the service too much so that demand exceeded the current limited opening hours and staffing levels. The purposeful approach on publicity has been for small scale organic growth of the helpline within the limitations of the current funding.

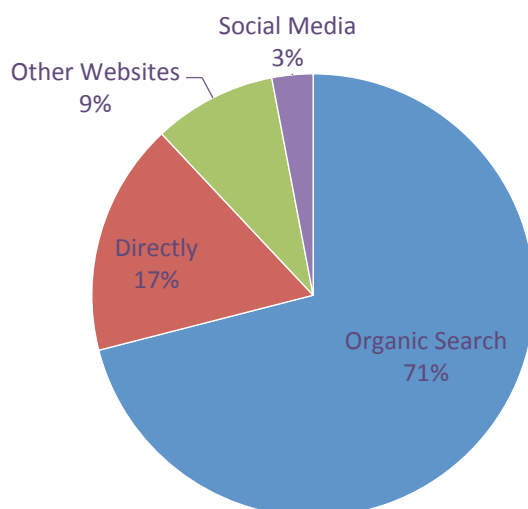
THE HELPLINE WEBSITE

There is a dedicated website for the helpline which is often the first point of contact with the service. The website contains a wealth of information about a range of issues. Visitors to the website will be able to access general information and advice and also details of other helplines and organisations that can provide support.

The summary data below shows that new and returning visitors are accessing the website and as they are remaining on the pages for a sufficient length of time, the information is relevant for them.

MWNUK Helpline Web Statistics 2015	
Number of visitors to the website	4605
Unique visitors to the website	3609
Total pages viewed	10,032
Number of pages viewed per session	2.18
Average session duration	2.12 minutes
New Sessions	78%

How people access the website



Website Downloads

The website has two downloadable resources available and the fact that they are being downloaded indicates that the information being provided is relevant and useful.

Forced Marriage Booklet: resource available from May 2015 - downloaded 231 times (May-Dec 2015).

Child Sexual Exploitation Booklet: resource available from Jan 2015 – downloaded 433 times (Jan-Dec 2015).

Observations

The data collated during 2015 shows that the website is an important source of information and is being accessed regularly. The average session duration is high (above one minute) and indicates that people are finding the content relevant to their needs. The download figures for the two booklets indicates an interest in both of these topics and the easy availability of these two resources is helping to provide a wide range of women and girls with relevant and accessible advice.

The website is not only a useful resource for information; it is also one way people find out about the helpline and make contact. Often this information is not recorded by the helpline worker so we are unsure how most people have found out about the helpline. It is mixture of: having seen a poster or helpline card, heard about us through a workshop, event or media or through another agency or by searching on the internet. In the future this information could be considered adding to the checklist for the helpline team to ask.

SECTION FOUR: SUPPORTING WIDER WORK OF MWNNUK

CASE STUDY: Sexuality and Forced Marriage

A Pakistani woman in her 20s was worried that her parents had become suspicious about her sexuality; they had started questioning her about the relationship with a female friend. They had started talking about getting her married. She did not want to get married and wanted to move in with her girlfriend. She said she was worried but also confused because she did not want to continue lying to her parents and was considering 'coming out' to them so they would no longer pressure her to get married.

She wanted to speak to someone that would understand her situation and advise her. She was provided with safety advice (for herself and her partner) and encouraged not to say anything to her parents until she was safe e.g. had moved out. She was advised to contact the police immediately if she was in danger. She was informed about her rights including that forced marriage was against the law. She was also put in touch with someone who works on Muslim LGBT issues to talk about her sexuality in more detail. This would help her to consider the consequences of disclosing and of not disclosing to her parents before making her decision.

MORE THAN A HELPLINE

Ethical Practice

The overall operation guideline of the Helpline is to work to the key principles of the MWNUK. A key message from the training was about being non-judgemental and not making decisions for people but helping them to empower themselves in a supportive way.

“The training we had makes the ethics and policy really clear and this is also about how we treat each other in the office” Helpline Volunteer

The team are given ideas about how to handle different types of queries so that they can explore the idea that this is rarely one correct course of action, there are many options that can be considered and it is about supporting the beneficiaries to make informed choices.

“I have been impressed by how open minded MWNUK are and how firm the belief is in non-judgemental practice. The first call I handled on the helpline was about polygamy and I had to consciously rein in my own opinion so that I could be sensitive to the needs of the beneficiary” Helpline Worker

Action Research

The Helpline supports the wider MWNUK objectives because it provides action research and case examples to a range of issues being faced by Muslim women.

When the MWNUK is working on an issue such as Forced Marriage or FGM they are able to use real case examples to support others to understand why these concerns need to be addressed by the whole UK community.

“To actually know what someone feels like in a forced marriage, helps us to reach the right people with a really powerful message”

Multi-Agency Working

The Helpline Service has been established so that not only are calls are responded to directly but there is also follow up actions taken where needed. This process is demonstrated in Zurafa’s story where MWNUK involved other agencies who failed to deliver a culturally sensitive service

Zurafa contacted the helpline because she was experiencing domestic violence from her husband and mother in law and her four children were being neglected. Zurafa did not speak English and was socially isolated. The situation involving the children was so serious that the helpline team agreed with Zurafa they had to share the information with other agencies – social services, police and education.

It was agreed that a female police officer would go to Zurafa's house to make a discreet visit with an interpreter to assess the situation. In a change from the agreed process a male officer attended in uniform, without an interpreter and whilst the husband was there. The officer reported back that everything was fine and the police intended to close the case.

The Helpline team followed up the intervention and have raised their concerns about how this situation has been handled. The contact with the police has provided the team with an opportunity to develop the police's understanding of an appropriate intervention in a situation where domestic violence is an issue.

There were several other instances during 2015 where the Helpline team contacted the police on the behalf of a beneficiary including situations where the police did not provide an adequate response on initial contact. The intervention from the Helpline team has led to the initial complaint being taken more seriously and action happening as a result of this. It is hoped that these interventions will help the police be more responsive to the needs of Muslim women and girls in the future so that they can feel more confident in voicing their concerns.

Supporting Change in Other Agencies

Some other agencies can have a limited perspective on the needs of Muslim women and their charitable guidelines are sometimes inconsistent or unclear so they do not always provide the support that is required.

Rasheeda was escaping from an honour based violence situation. She is a woman of Afghan heritage and a referral was made to a South Asian women's refuge. The staff would not accept her because according to their existing criteria Afghanistan did not appear in the list of South Asian countries. Rasheeda returned to her home where the situation escalated and the police and social services were involved.

The Helpline team raised concerns with the management team at the refuge about situation and as a result the charity has reviewed their policies and added Afghanistan to the list of South Asian countries.

Speaking with the team this type of follow up action to inform and educate other agencies is seen part of the work of the Helpline. This makes the Helpline very distinctive, in that it is providing front line support and using the knowledge from these events to encourage other agencies to reconsider their practice.

Providing Support to Other Agencies

A small number of calls to the MWNUK Helpline are from front line professionals or agencies on the behalf of women and girls. This has included calls from schools, colleges, social services, counsellors, pharmacists, police and GP surgeries.

Observation

The Helpline Team are alert to emerging themes about the needs of Muslim women so that they have a real sense of how these needs are changing in real time which supports the wider work.

The team are tireless in their efforts to raise awareness amongst other agencies about the needs of Muslim women. They also are actively encouraging these agencies to make changes to their practice.

There is a synergy between the awareness raising work done by the MWNUK and the support that the Helpline provides direct to the Muslim community. An example is that in the Forced Marriage Events a number of professionals from different agencies including schools and refuges have commented that they find it helpful to know that there is an organisation which can support women and girls in a culturally relevant way.

It was clear from the observations that the MWNUK work very hard on ensuring that both parts of their organisation are working together from the same set of principles and values. These principles and values are clearly communicated to all new team members and were consistency referred to during the daily work in the Helpline and during outreach events.

SECTION FIVE: THE HELPLINE TEAM

CASE STUDY: Divorce

A Bangladeshi woman in her 30s wanted to obtain an Islamic divorce. After getting married she had discovered that her husband had a 'drink and drugs' problem. He also beat her and was involved in criminal behaviour for which he had served a prison sentence. She contacted a Shariah Council to obtain the Islamic divorce but she felt that it was deliberately being delayed because they were siding with her husband despite the fact that she had provided evidence of his unreasonable behaviour. She said her husband was demanding £20,000 through the Shariah Council in exchange for an Islamic divorce. She was worried about not getting her divorce.

MWN Helpline advised her Islamic rights on divorce so she was better informed when contacting the Shariah Council again. The helpline worker also contacted the Shariah Council and raised concerns about the delay to her divorce. Their religious scholar agreed a timetable and process that would be followed over the following two months. The caller was updated and asked to contact the helpline again if she did not obtain the divorce in two months' time.

RECRUITMENT

The MWNUK Helpline has a structured recruitment process for both volunteers and employees. This includes a job description/requirement document which is sent to any interested people in advance. This is based on using an application form and a panel interview process which uses both case studies and real work examples to explore attitudes and views of potential volunteers and employees.

The team do not accept all applications to volunteer and have rejected candidates at interview stage, mainly due to the lack of understanding of the implications of the ethical principle of “non-judgemental support”

Observations

The Helpline Recruitment process is organised, well documented and appropriate for both volunteers and employees.

As the Helpline develops the management team will develop a deeper understanding of the required competencies for effective Helpline team members so should continuously review the recruitment process to make sure that it is developed in line with the future service needs.

USE OF VOLUNTEERS

Initially a cohort of 8 volunteers were recruited and trained to support the Helpline at the beginning of 2015. By April 2016 only one of these volunteers remains with the Helpline. The other seven have left due to various commitments – eg university, work, family commitments. Five of this cohort applied for a paid role and one was appointed and continues to work on the Helpline today.

A second cohort of volunteers began training in September 2015 and of these just one remains volunteering, covering 6 hours a week on the Helpline.

In the most recent cohort of volunteers a number of volunteers were not from a Muslim background so it would be useful to evaluate their progress and performance to help assess whether any additional support/development is needed for volunteers without a Muslim cultural heritage to fill in any potential gaps in understanding.

The time demand for volunteers is high and this may restrict people from applying, however currently this is not a problem for the Helpline, with more people volunteering than it is possible to provide meaningful experiences for due to the limitations of space. The challenge for the Helpline (in common with other organisations) is the retention of volunteers. Volunteers will join with the intention of a high level of involvement but may often find that changes in circumstances including the offer of paid work means that they

cannot continue. The MWNUK need to consider the full costs and benefits of using volunteers. The training provided is very rigorous, requiring 8 days of commitment and is very resource intensive for the organisation with no guarantee that the volunteers will remain with the organisation. As the Helpline develops it will be more cost effective to use employed workers to ensure that the Helpline has a consistent level of service delivery and to improve retention of people who have had a big investment made in their development.

INDUCTION TRAINING

Since establishing the Helpline training has been provided by a range of external experts including courses delivered by the Samaritans, Rape Crisis, a LGBT activist, GP and a discrimination lawyer. These inputs have formed the base for the in house training which is now provided by the MWNUK for new employees and volunteers.

There are children and safeguarding policies in place and the named safe guarding lead for the Helpline is a GP, who is one of the trustees of MWNUK. She is contacted by volunteers and employees during the year on safeguarding issues.

In November 2015 the Helpline recruited and trained a new cohort of volunteers. The training has 4 compulsory days which must be attended in full by volunteers, the dates are provided in advance and the volunteers will only be selected if they can attend these dates. These are followed by a series of half day sessions which are topic related and volunteers are expected to attend all of these days.

Volunteers are briefed about the training and are aware that the training will cover a series of sensitive topics and can be personally challenging.

Employees also attend relevant sessions and receive more tailored training to reflect the gaps in their professional experience from other roles. Where needed further sessions with expert speakers are arranged for the team.

Observations

The MWNUK have successfully transitioned their training provision from expert external provision into a sustainable and cost effective package which they can deliver in house.

The volunteer interviewed was very positive about the care and support provided during the training period.

“The training was really good, it is difficult to think of any improvements that could be made”

She commented about the sensitivity to the needs of the volunteers when attending training on such emotionally challenging topics such as FGM, Forced Marriage and LGBT issues.

The training seems to be well designed and interactive so that it was engaging throughout. The team also took care of the personal needs of the volunteers by covering travel costs and providing food during the day. This attention to detail reflects well on the caring principles of the wider MWNUK and the costs of these supportive touches are very low in comparison to the engagement it seems to engender from the volunteers.

There were some comments during my visit about the retention level for volunteers which were felt to be low. It would be worth considering reviewing the “volunteer journey” to identify potential areas where improvements could be made to the experience so that retention is improved as the intensive training provided is a big demand on resources for the team.

WORK BASED TRAINING

Once volunteers and new employees have completed their induction training they are gradually integrated into the Helpline service and an assessment is made of their readiness to handle calls.

The Helpline phone service has a facility for listening to calls and for the instructor to be able give advice to the volunteer without the beneficiary being able to hear this advice (“call whispering”) The process from observation and “going live” on the phones is negotiated between the volunteer and the supervisor.

There is a facility to record calls and use these in training although during 2015 there was not time to implement this into the training programme due to the large volumes of new volunteers/staff training which was required.

In addition “training moments” are introduced into team meetings and during case reviews to update team members about changes in legislation or to remind them of principles linked to the wider MWNUK.

An example of this was the “Ethics Day” which was attended by some of the Helpline Team along with the Board members in April 2015. This day highlighted the importance to the MWNUK about having a non-judgemental approach as part of the core values for the organisation. This was highlighted to the Helpline team and is a core message throughout all the training.

During a Helpline Session the team members are logged onto UKGoldBook Online. This is a resource created by Women’s Aid which provides up to date advice and resources to support survivors of domestic violence throughout the UK.

Observation

The Helpline Manager is consciously bringing in training and development opportunities throughout the working day. The team all expressed high levels of satisfaction with the training provided. In addition the Chair of MWNUK (Shaista Gohir) has done significant amounts of training, supporting the new staff and volunteers to become knowledgeable about many of the important legal, financial, ethical and psychological issues affecting Muslim women and girls.

By investing in services such as the UKGoldbook Online (used to locate refuge spaces) the MWNUK Helpline is keeping up to date with changing information and services so that they are able to provide relevant and factually correct advice on the Helpline.

One of the challenges for the Helpline is the broad remit of the service means that all helpline volunteers and employees need to have a real breadth of awareness and understanding. It also means that the Helpline Manager has to be vigilant on a range of topics to ensure that any changes in law or policy are identified and quickly communicated to the team.

If the team grows in the future then there will need to be recognition of the need for additional management support to ensure that there is adequate time to train and develop the team.

An area for future training that was mentioned was counselling skills training to further enhance the skills of team in their abilities to listen, sensitively summarise what the issues are and explore possible options.

STAFFING LEVELS

The helpline is operated by a small team of 4 employees working part time, to the equivalent of one full time worker. In addition 2 of the employees work 2 days on outreach work related to the helpline. The helpline manager is included in these numbers and works 2 days a week on the helpline and is also employed for other projects within the MWNUK on additional days.

In addition there are a number of volunteers who support with the helpline and other related activities (eg preparing resources for outreach)

Observation

The current staffing levels are low for a 5.5 day a week operation. The highest hours recorded for case work was in April and June with 80 hours recorded and this was during a period when the helpline was only open for 3 week day sessions and a 2 hour evening session.

Whilst 80 hours of case work is within capacity for one full time worker averaged across the month at 20 hours a week this does not take into account the team do need to be mindful of peak overloads.

The workload must continue to be monitored because whilst the figures look acceptable on paper the realities of the work mean that once you factor in time spent recording, note taking, updating other colleagues, supervision and training then there is not much spare capacity in some periods.

The team manager hours are included in the full time equivalent and this post holder has additional responsibilities for training, developing and supervising which means her hours are not all available for front line service.

The staffing levels may put the helpline team at risk of burnout if they are unable to take time back in quieter periods to compensate for extra hours during the busy periods. It is something that we recommend that the management team monitor and take action to either reduce official opening hours or to increase the levels of staffing so that at least two people can operate the helpline and to provide a case worker to manage the more detailed follow up work for complex cases.

SECTION SIX: DELIVERING A PROFESSIONAL HELPLINE SERVICE

CASE STUDY: Revenge Porn

A 16 year old Pakistani teenage girl was being blackmailed by a boy at her college. She had been befriended by him and started dating him. He had persuaded her to send him photos of herself without any clothes except for her headscarf. He then shared these photos with her and others and threatened to send them to her family. She was very worried and upset and had informed her teacher who phoned the Helpline.

The teacher was provided with information about the specialist Revenge Porn helpline and advised to work with them and contact the police. The young man was expelled and the college then supported the girl through the process.

Good Practice

“Helplines provide a trusted space, confidential services and impartial support or advice. There is credible research to suggest that people will use anonymous and confidential helplines to discuss problems that they find too challenging to raise with a loved one or healthcare professional. Sonia Howe “Helplines on the Front Line” [2014](#)

One of the objectives of the MWNUK was to establish a Helpline which would be professionally operated. During the set up period visits were made to three other Helplines which have a positive reputation in the sector and which would cover some of the issues that the Helpline team anticipated they would be faced with. Visits were made to:

- Women’s Aid Helpline
- NSPCC Helpline
- Muslim Youth Helpline

During these visits the team sought to understand more about the different techniques and systems that they had in place and took the learning from this to ensure that the MWNUK Helpline reflected a similar professional standard.

Support Network

The Helpline is part of the community of [Helpline Partnerships](#) which ensures that they are listed on the website and will receive information on events and news items.

The Helpline Partnership gives guidance on good practice in providing Helpline Services and helps the team to learn from other services.

Consistency

One of the challenges for managing a small team of part employees and volunteers is keeping consistency in practice.

A simple checklist has been devised to help the team settled quickly into the preparation for the opening of the Helpline at 10.00. The checklist covers personal preparation eg placing phones into silent mode and tasks to prepare for Helpline Calls such as ensuring all relevant web applications are open and ready for opening time.

Observation

The evaluation report is based on the first year of operation of a new helpline service. It has been a process of constant improvement throughout the year. The leadership team have identified ways of improving the service and ensuring consistency amongst a diverse team.

The use of the checklist is a recommended practice for complex, multi-tasking and helps ensure that small elements do not get forgotten when the team get busy.

The links with the Helpline Partnership are encouraging because they enable the Helpline Team to measure their performance against the professional practice of other organisations.

CONFIDENTIALITY/SAFEGUARDING

For a Helpline Service confidentiality is a vital component to build the trust with current and future beneficiaries of the service.

The team have been given clear guidance on confidentiality and explain to beneficiaries that this is a confidential service.

There are occasions when confidentiality has to be breached for reasons of potential risk of harm to the individual or to others and/or where a multi-agency referral needs to be made. These breaches in confidentiality are communicated to the beneficiary. This is usually done verbally and an example was provided of the explanation:

“what you have told me has really concerned me and I cannot ignore what you have said. I will try to involve you in what happens next but it may not be exactly what you would want”

In most cases the beneficiary appreciates why information needs to be passed onto other agencies.

When confidentiality needs to be breached a safeguarding process is put in place. This requires the Helpline member to log the incident on the data base and to complete a Safeguarding Form which is sent to the Safeguarding Co-ordinator. All safeguarding concerns are recorded and filed in the safeguarding folder including any breaches of confidentiality that were necessary.

In 2015 there were 7 safeguarding cases were sent to the Safeguarding Co-ordinator and 5 breaches in confidentiality forms were signed. In addition one MARAC Referral (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference) was made by the Helpline Team for someone who was deemed at a high risk of violence.

The Safeguarding Co-ordinator was confident that these were all appropriate in showing a duty of care to the individual and the wider community.

Observations

Confidentiality is taken very seriously by the Helpline team. During the observation visit the principles/importance of confidentiality and safe guarding were explained to callers to the Helpline and discussed in the team meeting.

The team clearly recognise a wider duty of care to the beneficiary, to their family and to the wider public which may mean at times having to breach this agreement of confidentiality. It seems that this process is well understood and any breaches of confidentiality are done with the best interests of those concerned.

DATA RECORDING

Each call received is logged onto a log sheet “Helpline Call Log Sheet” during the call and is transferred to the database by the person taking the call.

The paper copies are stored for 6 months to provide a backup should the database fail. The copies are kept in a locked cabinet and are destroyed after six months and this process is managed by the Helpline Manager

A bespoke database has been designed for MWNUK Helpline and is able to capture and process large amounts of information in a robust manner. Testing has been done during the first year to resolve any bugs in the software. The database is managed by the Helpline Manager and Executive Director.

For calls where there is felt to be need for further action or where it is felt highly likely that the beneficiary will make contact again then a short note is made recording this call onto [Trello](#).

Trello is a visual organising app. Information is recorded on here to help all members of the team to follow up appropriately.

A process is in place to shred and remove all notes taken during calls at the end of each Helpline session

Observation

A great deal of care is spent recording details from the calls to ensure that the Helpline performance can be measured. The recording also helps provide a mechanism to support consistent follow up work within the team.

The combination of a paper based and electronic system may mean recording data is potentially more time consuming than it needs to be. Future investment into technology to streamline this process may be worthwhile. A simple use of telephone headsets instead of handsets may help some data to be inputted directly into the database whilst on a call.

Using Trello seems to work well in the team meeting and observation of its use showed it was an effective way to highlight open cases. It is worth considering if the use of Trello and the database is causing further duplication of effort.

The production of statistics for this report highlighted the need for created consistency in the recording of some of the details in the database by all members of the Helpline team. This is now raised within team meetings and there will be monitoring during the year to make sure data is recorded in an accurate and timely manner. This will ensure that statistics are maintained throughout the year to support on-going decision making for the management team/board.

SECTION SEVEN: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CASE STUDY: Extremism

A woman in her late 20s and of mixed Asian and White heritage background was in an abusive relationship with a White man who had converted to Islam. He would regularly harass and beat her. He was putting pressure on her to wear the 'burkha' and the face veil to prove that she was a 'good Muslim.' He wanted to leave the UK and go to Syria for 'jihad' and was putting pressure on her to go with him but she did not want to go.

The woman was informed that in this case confidentiality had to be breached and the police had to be contacted. The police were given details of the situation and the woman has since moved and is now safe.

CONCLUSIONS

The Helpline Service has established itself as a valuable service for Muslim Women and Girls and for a small team is reaching out to a range of different beneficiaries. The team is professionally established and takes great care over the implementation of policies such as confidentiality and data recording.

The Helpline Service both reflects the wider ethos of the MWNUK and contributes to the work of the MWNUK by providing practical examples of issues affecting Muslim Women. This gives the team a real insight into the future needs of the Muslim Women's population in the UK, which will enable MWNUK to support the development of services and government policies which are appropriate and responsive.

The Impact of the MWNUK Helpline after one year of operation is difficult to measure fully as some of the changes being sought are much longer term. Some of the impact statements may need re-wording so that it is easier to assess the achievements of the team against these

Impact	Achievements
<p>Increase in reporting of violence against women and girls</p>	<p>➔ In 16% of calls an element of violence was mentioned (for example rape, sexual abuse, domestic violence, honour based violence) Calling the Helpline was often the first step in reporting this violence which helps build a picture of how much Muslim women are affected by violence. A small proportion of these calls are thought to have then contacted the police (this is however very difficult to track evidentially so we are reliant on anecdotal recall)</p>
<p>More women and girls getting the help they need and making informed decisions about their lives</p>	<p>➔ 335 people benefitted from contact with the Helpline. 91% were women/girls</p>
<p>Reduced burden on other agencies due to targeted referrals</p>	<p>➔ Many callers needed information and advice however just over one fifth (21%) of callers were targeted referrals to other helplines (5%), refuges (3%) or other agencies (13%)</p>

Women and girls being better prepared in case of their problem escalating



During calls women and girls are advised to call the police or other appropriate helplines (eg Women's Aid which operates a 24 hour Helpline Service) if the situation escalates. The Helpline workers will also provide advice about how to keep themselves safe and suggestions about what to have packed so that they can leave quickly in an emergency. Where appropriate follow up calls are made to beneficiaries to see how they are getting on and during these follow up calls it has been evident that some beneficiaries have taken action by contacting other services as advised by the Helpline.

As issues faced by Muslim women and girls are often complex and connected, better linkages being made across these issues resulting in better quality of help



From the data collected we can see that 51% of callers are calling with a secondary issue and almost 17% have a third issue that emerges during the contact with the Helpline. The generic nature of the Helpline enables the Helpline team to ask broad questions and review each beneficiary's situation in a holistic manner which enables the Helpline to detect and support women across a range of issues that are affecting them.

Women and girls feeling less isolated knowing help is a phone call away



Isolation is often a theme in the calls to the Helpline. The conversation on the Helpline is the first time that many of the beneficiaries have shared their concern with anyone and they comment how the sharing process helps them to feel less isolated. In 7% of the calls isolation is a specific concern which the helpline team address during the call.

Improved faith based responses by theologians that benefit women



Over the year 18 of the calls (5%) were for faith advice. This could be for specific advice on dress, marriage or for new converts wanting advice about groups they could join. However theological advice is often an underlying theme in other calls. Examples include a call about whether abortion is ever acceptable in Islam, the legalities of a Muslim marriage in the UK, domestic abuse (eg being forced to wear a veil).

Building up a better national profile about the issues encountered by Muslim women and girls and how these affect their lives and identify patterns to influence policy and practice



The Helpline has developed anonymised case studies based on real life situations raised during Helpline calls. These case studies are a valuable resource and are already being used in national awareness raising sessions and talks provided by the MWNUK on themes of forced marriage and honour based violence. The statistics recorded by the team show themes and patterns which can often highlight gaps in policy and practice. The team are proactive in initiating and responding to government consultations with case studies and statistical evidence to influence future policy and practice. The case studies and information from the Helpline is also used on training professionals, producing booklets, videos and also media resources.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Over the first year of operation there is clear evidence that the team have been responsive to the need for constant service improvement. This has included a change in opening hours, additional record keeping and the introduction of the daily checklist.

Our recommendations are given to support the MWNUK Helpline to continue to develop and to do the very best that is possible with the resources available. All the recommendations are offered as possible considerations for the board, in our opinion there is no urgent necessity for immediate changes to be made, just a constant focus on continuous improvement and development.

- 1. Increasing Helpline Team** – during the first year of operation the MWNUK Helpline has established itself and there is clearly a demand for this type of service. The complexity of the calls means that there needs to be more than one person operating the helpline so that additional calls can be taken if a call becomes complex. Reliance of volunteers or the Helpline Manager being able to pick up additional calls is not a long term solution. Additional admin support will enable the team to record all the relevant data and maintain case notes.
- 2. Recruiting a Case Worker** – the multi-issue complexity of the needs of many beneficiaries means that follow up work is required for many of the calls. Having a dedicated case worker will ensure that the Helpline workers can focus on answering queries and can pass on longer term work to the case worker. This will also help consistency for the beneficiary as just one person will be following up on their concerns.

3. **Establishing an In-House Counselling Service** – the number of calls which are very complex with multi-needs is striking and there have clearly been benefits to some women of being able to use the pilot counselling service established in 2015. Having the ability to refer to a counsellor who is known to be culturally and faith sensitive clearly offers a wider service and support to the Helpline callers.
4. **Developing Outreach Services** – the team are successfully connecting with schools and colleges in the Birmingham area thanks to some specific funding. This service could usefully be provided in the other key population areas for Muslims and would help make further develop the relationship with younger Muslim women, who may be at significant risk of harm and lack knowledge of sources of support. As a national service the MWNUK Helpline could use additional outreach workers to reach out to Muslim communities in the North West/East where there is a lower take up of the Helpline Service than in the Midlands.
5. **Exploring Ways of Reaching People** – the typical profile of a MWNUK Helpline user is a Muslim woman, from Pakistani origins aged between 22-40 years old living in the Midlands. The MWNUK are keen to explore other ways of reaching out, particularly to younger women and the idea of exploring a mobile phone application will be worth developing along with other strategies to engage with younger women.
6. **Strategy and Planning** – as the service develops time should be taken for the Helpline team to be able to meet and review progress and identify clear strategies and plans for the future. This will help the team to recognise progress and to support the further development of the Helpline in the future.
7. **Collaboration and Inter-agency working** – excellent work has started in this area and during 2016/7 this can be further developed so that other agencies so that they are referring clients to the Helpline. This will need additional outreach team members who could offer training and support to other organisations offering Helpline services to widen their understanding of the needs of Muslim Women by using real case studies from the Helpline.
8. **Data Analysis** – reviewing the data that is captured and identifying any areas needing amending. We caution against too much data collection, it is better to identify what is the most useful data to record and do that really consistently than collect data when gives you little meaningful insight into the needs of your users. It would be useful to capture and provide hours worked each week for volunteers and employees for future evaluations.
9. **Data Recording** – explore ways of streamlining the recording system to reduce duplication and time spent and paperwork. We also recommend that you consider the recording of ethnic groupings so it is consistent with the census.

10. **Supervision and Support** - As hours increase on the helpline it will be important to ensure that sufficient time is provided to provide good quality supervisor and guidance to both volunteers and employees. The Helpline work can be very emotionally draining and it is important that employees and volunteers are able to share some of these concerns. This may mean that the Helpline Manager should become less involved in calls so that she has more capacity to:
- a. Monitor and Evaluate Standards
 - b. Develop and implement service improvements based on good practice from other agencies and from the Helpline Partnership
 - c. Identify Case Studies from the Helpline which can be used to support the wider work of MWNUK
 - d. Support the recruitment and retention of volunteers
11. **Keeping Up to date** – the range of services provided are so wide that there is a need for members of the team to be allocated specific areas to ensure that the information is kept up to date and is current.
12. **Working Hours** – in a busy atmosphere it can be easy to neglect to ensure that working hours and conditions are managed so that they are able to give of their best each time. The pace of the work is very demanding but currently all workers are part time so have sufficient “down time”. The team need to be mindful that if hours increase for each worker she will may not be able to work at the same level of observed intensity in the longer term and there may be a risk of professional “burnout”.
13. **Call Recording** – during 2016 there should be a process established for regular call recording and feedback to each Helpline worker so that consistency of the call handling can be confirmed and good practice quickly identified and shared amongst the team.

**SECTION
EIGHT:
APPENDIX**

ISSUE	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
Abortion / Pregnancy	1	3	0
Addiction – Alcohol	4	2	0
Addiction – Drugs	1	1	1
Child Abuse (neglect)	4	0	1
Child Sexual Abuse	5	4	1
Child Sexual Exploitation	4	0	0
Children / Custody	9	5	2
Complaints about public services	0	1	0
Disability Issues	5	0	0
Discrimination / Islamophobia	4	0	0
Divorce	42	9	3
Domestic Violence	28	20	2
Eating Disorder (self harm)	0	2	2
Education	6	0	0
Elderly Issues	1	0	0
Employment / Work	1	2	0
Extremism	1	0	0
Faith / Spirituality	8	7	3
Female Genital Mutilation	2	0	0
Forced Marriage	24	6	2
Health (physical)	4	7	4
Honour Based Violence	5	3	1
Housing / Homelessness	12	10	3
Immigration	6	6	1
Isolation / Loneliness	11	10	3
Jinn / Black magic	1	2	0
Marriage	52	23	8
Mental Health Feelings	22	21	6
Money / Finance	2	6	4
None	5	164	279
Other	17	7	6
Rape / Sexual Violence	6	3	1
Relationships	17	6	1
Revenge Porn	2	2	0
Sexual Exploitation (Adults)	0	0	0
Sexual Health	1	0	0
Sexuality	5	0	0
Stalking / Harassment	4	3	0
Suicide / Self Harm	1	0	1
Trafficking	1	0	0
Unknown	11	0	0
TOTAL	335	335	335
Total Additional Issues		171	56